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BY CLERGYMEN OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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SERMON I.

DELIVERED IN TRINITY CHURCH, BOSTON, BEFORE THE CONVENTION OF THE EASTERN DIOCESE, SEPTEMBER, 29, 1830.

BY THE REV. CARLTON CHASE.
Rector of Emmanuel Church, Bellows' Falls Vt.

LOVE TO MAN NECESSARILY CONNECTED WITH LOVE TO GOD.

MAT. XXII, 37, 38, 39. Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
This is the first and great commandment.
And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

IF I leave the peculiarities of our Church to repose on their already sufficiently established foundation, and invite your thoughts to realities permanent and influencing beyond all visible institutions, I hope I shall not be regarded as evading the appropriate duty of the occasion. I can look at the subject in no point of view but I am brought directly to the conclusion, that the Church of Christ is a RESULT, proceeding from, and obtained through the influence of truth,—truth not temporary and incidental—not the truth of circumstance and expediency—but truth eternal as the being of God. Eternal truth, made luminous to the mind by the Spirit of God operating in the truth and in the mind, is the sovereign instrument of transformation to souls of sinners. And without its effectual working the materials for a church cannot exist among men,—without its continued influence in sanctification, the building, when reared, cannot endure.

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The first of the commands repeated above is founded on that great truth, every where asserted in the Scriptures and witnessed by the inward "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,"—namely, that God is worthy of the supreme love of all intelligent beings; and that their happiness and glory depend on their making him their chief good—their "all in all."

The second command is founded on the truth, that no one of the creatures of God *has* or *can* have an interest detached from the interest of all others,—that he who seeks for happiness by a course *strictly and exclusively his own*, will never find it—because God's eternal system is such, that the glory of the individual is bound up in the principles of his government over all —and because there is no *law* or *principle* in the universe, by which selfish aims and selfish rules of pursuit can obtain the crown of enduring good.

On these grounds rest the commands,—and those commands we may consider as a mode of revealing and impressing these truths.

It is not my purpose to enter formally and at large into an analysis of love to God, or of love to men. The possession of love is a question of *fact*—to be settled by reflection and consciousness in the bosom of each individual. He who possesses it, cannot fail to *know*, that he possesses it,—because the exercise is voluntary—and we cannot exert the will responsibly without being conscious of the exertion.

On the other hand, it is by no means certain, that they who possess it not, will not sometimes imagine, that they possess it,—will not sometimes give to other feelings and other exercises the misnomer of love to God—or, as the case may be, of love to men.

To convince such persons of their errour, one method is, to call their attention to the quality of their fruits,—to show them, that if they truly loved God, or spiritually loved man, their life would be a series of far other aims and far other deeds, than it is.

Another method is, to show them how their feelings and exercises may be fully accounted for without admitting the presence of any permanent spiritual principle whatever.—In this discourse you will perceive an occasional reference to both methods.

As a basis to some practical suggestions I shall endeavour to show, that between true love to God, and true love to man there is an *inseparable* and *necessary* connexion. The one *cannot* exist without the other,—insomuch that in the emphatical language of St. John, "He who says he loves God, and loves not his brother man, is a liar."—You will observe, that I speak of a NECESSARY CONNEXION, and not of an uncertain *relation*. He who really possesses the one, really possesses the other also.

In the Scriptures we find this connexion everywhere brought to view in one form or another,—in the form of *doctrine*, or in the form of *example*. St. Paul's view of it was so clear and decided, that he thought it no robbery of God to pronounce these words—which on any other principle could not be justified without the most liberal explanations—"All the law is fulfilled in one word,—even in this—thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The writer knew that this holy sentiment could not exist but as a shoot from the root of love to a common Father; and as trained under the influence of just views of his government over all.

Those gifted saints, whose spirits went up daily to worship around God's throne, while their tabernacle remained below—how was it with them? How was it with those high-communing souls, whom the Holy Spirit has set forth as our examples? Do we find, that a love of themselves and of God left no room in their hearts for an affectionate interest in the spiritual welfare of their brethren in the world? No,—we find, that the love of Christ constrained them to love the souls of men. What persecutions—what afflictions—what labours they endured, that they might fully preach the Gospel of eternal salvation to sin-

ners ! And what was the impulse to those astonishing efforts? It was the *one* impulse of *one love*, having Christ and man for its objects--and the end everlasting life to a perishing world.

An Apostle prays thus for the Thessalonians—"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you." If this was religion in the hearts of men then, can there be any difficulty in the question, what should be religion in the hearts of us now ; And therefore what new doctrine *is* this, that a man may live quietly and happily in the possession of love to God, while he looks with indifference on the poor multitudes around him, who are "without hope and without God in the world ?" Selfishness was and is the great sin of the human race. And is it after all to be refined into a holy sentiment of religion? No,—God's eternal system is such, that the glory of the individual is bound up in the principles of his government over all. There is no law or principle in the universe, by which selfish affections—selfish aims—and selfish modes of pursuit can obtain the crown of enduring good.

Let us consider the human soul with reference to the act of receiving and submitting to the influence of this powerful sentiment.

The heart does not fix its affections on God without an insight of his character—of his character in a state of *display*. Our faith indeed acquiesces in the declaration, that he is essentially excellent. But we do not realize his excellence in entire abstraction from *all working*—from all out-flowing of good. The beam of light, which enters the eye of faith, comes from a working God. And this beam is traced upward by the mind, till we obtain the amazing idea of a supreme personality as the ground and source of personality to the individuals of our race,—and not only so, but the scource and finisher of a system of spiritual operations, which fill the beholder with astonishment and delight. Thus it is not through the purport of

names and definitions alone, that the soul is enabled to realize in God an object worthy of perfect love. It fixes its contemplation on "the wonders, that he doeth for the children of men,"—and in them it finds a manifestation of his love to a world of self-ruined sinners. And can a renovated soul think of its own experience of mercy—can it view the system of means, which has been appointed for the bringing of wanderers home—can it remember, that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son for its salvation—without feeling, that if God so loved men, men ought to love one another. No—it is impossible. Love must be dead in that soul, which finds not this fruit of the spirit,—this impulse to the love of fellow beings.

You perceive, that I do not rest this matter exclusively on the ground of a positive *verbal* command,—I also rest it firmly on that nature of spiritual things, which by divine disposal was the antecedent ground of the command itself. The command is but the declaration of a necessary tendency in the soul of a regenerated man,—and by trying himself on that declaration, man may learn whether he has professed the faith of Christ *in* faith—whether the "love of God has in very deed been shed abroad in his heart."—And thus, though the second commandment in our Lord's summary had never been given in terms, yet he who had been truly brought to love God, would find included in that love an impulse to the love of his fellow men. He would learn by heartfelt suggestion, that if a man love not his brother, whom he hath seen—and in whom and around whom he has witnessed the manifestations of God's mercy and love in a thousand forms—it *cannot* be, that the love of God is a ruling principle in his soul.

That a man may know so much of God, and be so transformed in his immortal spirit, as truly to love him—I say not now with *all* his heart, and soul and mind and strength, but with a measure of his being's energy proportioned to his insight of

truth.—and thus in humble hope to present himself for trial on the first and great commandment—without any reference of his thoughts or leaning of his soul to that other commandment, which is like it—without finding in his love of God a reason and an impulse to the love of man, who is "made after the similitude of God"—is a proposition, which never was—never will be—and never can be realized in fact. The things of the spirit cannot be so separated. Christian graces cannot be so selected and so excluded—so cultivated and so neglected. Reason denounces the thought as inconsistent with those universal principles on which character is formed—and with those properties of being of which every thoughtful man is conscious.

Accordingly few people are satisfied with making a profession of love to God without making at the same time a profession of something, to which they can with fair appearance give the name of love to men. But, my brethren—and I appeal particularly to the pastoral experience of my brethren in the ministry—are you not often pained to find a want of the reality, where the profession is boldly advanced? Do you not with distressing frequency meet with professing Simons, who think that the gift of God may be purchased with an offering that is not the heart? And do not both duty and love constrain you to break in on the repose of delusive hopes, by showing how feelings and exercises may be fully accounted for without admitting the presence of any permanent spiritual principle whatever? "By their fruits ye will know them." "Try the spirits whether they be of God."

Self-complacency, strengthened by education and the supposed merit of merely external compliances, readily brings one to the conclusion, that it cannot be, he is so *unnatural* as not to love his Maker. What! says he, will you rank me with scoffers and atheists?—And as to loving his fellow-men, he is prepared to show, that he has given the best evidence of it in the world—being able to name the very time, when he forgave a tres-

passer, clothed a shivering family—wept with the afflicted, or delivered a poor creature from difficulty and danger.

But let us look at this,—perhaps it will not bear an examination creditable to the self-complaisant professor.—People who write or speak about religion, have, of course, frequent occasion to mention *love to God.* But may we not—must we not doubt in many cases superficially fair, whether they have meditated deeply, intelligently and feelingly on the meaning of that expression? Can they hold forth the object of their professed affection in any sort of detail or analysis? Men cannot love the mere combinations of an alphabet—or mere sounds—mere creatures of vocal articulation. If we truly love God, we love him "as *seeing* him who is invisible,"—we have an insight of his attributes or moral qualities. It is these, then, which are the *realized* objects of our affection,—and not a name, or a sound, or a fancied form. It is on the divine perfections, that the strong free mind of the renovated man fastens. And in view of these, his soul is enlarged—his admiration kindled, and his powers of praise brought into high and holy action. *Love to God* is love of truth—of holiness—of justice—of mercy—of benevolence—of wisdom, as united in infinite perfection in one and the same being.

Now, does not every one who knows any thing of the manner in which the objects of his love or hatred affect his character and desires, see plainly the impossibility of loving these qualities without possessing some measure of them? Without a gradual assimilation of his own spirit to that excellence, with which his faith invests the God of his affections? It is only when God has begotten us again through the truth, that we *can* feel a real approbation of his holiness. Nor can we cordially approve his benevolence without possessing at the same time a disposition to support and carry forward those great designs which his benevolence has formed for the benefit of men. Just conceptions of his character have a transforming tendency.

Beholding the glory of the Lord, men are changed into the same image.

Bring the views and feelings of men to examination by these principles, and I fear it will be found in many cases, that what has been put to the credit-side as *love to God*, is nothing more than a customary respect for a distinguished name,—and that what has been claimed as love to men, is nothing more than the gentle and sympathetic feelings of our social nature.—

> "They worship nature in the hill and valley
> Not knowing what they love."

If we inquire on what ground in the object we ought to regard the well-being of our fellow-men with an affectionate interest, we shall see, that spiritual *love* is not the same thing as humanity and friendly feelings. The former, indeed, never exists without the latter,—but the history of the whole unchristianized world proves abundantly, that the latter may exist without the former. By spiritual love I mean a love of soul to soul—of the permanent part of man to the permanent part of man. The ground is plainly this—that, though evil and disobedient now, they are capable, through the power of God and the continuance of his mercies, of becoming holy,—that by aid of that love, with which God still regards them, they may yet rise to high and blessed abodes—may yet be raised from the darkness of ignorance, the debasement of sin, and the death of moral sensibility—may yet reach the top of Pisgah in time to survey the blessed land with eyes of faith,—not because they have a visible frame and an animal nature—not because they are able to taste the sweetness of food—to enjoy the suns of summer—to surprise us with strange deeds—not because they are so constituted as to rejoice in health and suffer in sickness,—but because God has given them a *spirit*, which must live forever,—a spirit, which by the power of truth and the grace of God, may yet be saved from misery and sin, and be sent up to dwell forever with the Lord.

Such is the light in which wicked man is to be viewed by man as an object of christian affection. We say nothing of character—of virtues—of moral worth,—but we insist on the *capabilities* of character, which the mercy of God permits still to remain to him. We present him as a being, who needs but a spiritual regeneration and sanctification, to fit him for the eternal kingdom of Christ. And we invite attention to the means, which Christ has entrusted to all who love him, of doing something towards advancing that important change.

It is easy, then, to answer the question, whether humanity—kindliness of disposition—or natural sympathy, towards the sufferers of bodily pain and privation, is nothing less than the brotherly love of Christ's Gospel. It is infinitely less. It is entirely a distinct thing,—insomuch, that in the social virtues of the world a man may be irreproachable—while his heart is an utter stranger to the peculiar impressions of religion, and to those affections with which the children of the Gospel contemplate the character of God.—Think not that I mean to denounce the social sympathies; No,—let them be directed to man *as* man—as a being endowed with an immortal soul,—and not to man as a mere earth-born animal, whose ephemeris alternates between suffering and revelry.

It is evident, then, that true love to men is very nearly connected with true love to God. The grounds in each case are intimately and necessarily connected with the most essential principles of revealed religion. Therefore, according to St. John, "If a man say, I love God, and loveth not his brother, he is a liar." He is still a stranger to holy affections—and has yet to learn "which be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."

In many points of view, this, my brethren, is a subject of great practical importance; for without a clear discovery of the inseparable connexion between love to God and love to man—love to man, sinner as he is—and a distinct consciousness of its

existence in the heart, there can be no breadth of vision to the eye of faith. Divine rewards, if thought of at all, will be thought of only as the miser thinks of his gold—which he values for no reason but because it is his own. He whose religion gives him no impulse to exertion in the cause of others' happiness, ought to conclude—as all men must conclude for him—that as yet he knows nothing and feels nothing as he ought. There will be no solitude in Heaven,—and the man who can content himself with solitary affections, solitary desires and selfish aims, will find when he dies, that the Saviour has prepared no mansion for such a character.

If the views which have been exhibited, have struck your minds with force, you have not waited till this moment to learn, that they call us to a solemn self-examination. May it not be, that we have lived under a profession of religion without realizing its characteristic energies? Without that only true love, which prompts to abundant exertion in the harvest-field of our God? If we are indifferent to the eternal interests of men—if we can witness the miseries of sin without a tear of compassion —why should we not conclude, that we are indifferent to sin in ourselves,—and that our profession of love to God is wholly a mistake of our self-love? That we have fallen into the delusion of looking for rewards, while we are far from being in the character to enjoy them?—I certainly would not say, that it is the duty of all to become preachers of the Gospel in the professional sense of the expression,—though I must say, it is the duty of all to receive and encourage those who are such, "that they may be fellow-helpers to the truth." Let no one think himself too insignificant to be bound to so high a duty. Every man has his sphere of influence,—and within that he may do much good, or much evil. The one or the other he must and will do,—for there is no neutral ground.

Are we "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God?" We go forth professedly in the name of him, who died

that sinners might live. When we declare his love to a guilty and perishing world, do we it in love? Or do we it as the business of an office? Is it truly our heart's desire and prayer to God, that men may be "saved with an everlasting salvation?" Do we realize the glory of the work of truth? And do our hearts glow, when we witness its triumphs? Does it make us happy to see the clouds of ignorance and superstition and corruption vanish before the sun of righteousness? And do we look forward in joy of faith to the hour, when our own little flocks shall cluster around the throne of his glory, and when all the nations of the earth shall be gathered before him? These are not the labours, the desires, the joys and the hopes of flesh and blood. They are the genuine fruits of an unfeigned love to Christ and to the souls of men.

On the other hand, are we cold-hearted and formal—approaching our work as a task, and turning to other sources for our enjoyments—averse to solemn and absorbing views of religion, it is to be feared, that we shall neither save ourselves, nor them that hear us. "How dwelleth the love of God in us?" We as well as others must be judged by our fruits.

There is another thing, my brethren, whose relation to this subject you cannot fail to see. It is the missionary enterprize —an enterprize, which claims all hearts alike—the hearts of the people no less than the hearts of the Clergy. If we say we love God—if we profess to be disciples of Christ, while we think little and coldly of the moral degradation and spiritual darkness which overspread a great portion of the world, is it not probable, that we count upon a character, which we do not possess, and rely on general professions without submitting to the proper influence of Christian truth? How can the Christian, who knows that the religion of Christ alone can qualify sinners for the joys of Heaven, stand still, and do nothing, and say nothing, and give nothing—while millions of his fellow-creatures, in whose forefathers Paul turned his back, when he

came westward preaching the kingdom of Christ, are perishing like beasts? I must still maintain, that true Christian affections are so inconsistent with such apathy, that they cannot exist together in the nature of things. But though "the root of the matter be found in us," are not both our affections and our exertions much below the point of duty? And ought we not earnestly to pray, that God will more and more increase in us that spirit of life, without which the heart is never free, nor the hand liberal, nor the purpose resolute? We must not rely on our own will, nor on a strength not received from him. Our sufficiency is of him—"without whom nothing is strong, nothing holy."

I hope, my brethren, I am not addressing mere earth-born and earth-ending believers. I address *living* and *rational souls*. I address the deathless principle in you, which glowed in the breasts of Apostles and martyrs—and which enabled them to throw all things into the Lord's hands, that they might win souls to happiness in him. Let not then your hearts be narrow. Let not the boundaries of towns and states be the boundaries of your Christian love. Let it be your heart's desire and prayer to God and labour of love, that all nations and kindreds and tongues may come to the knowledge of him, and of salvation by Christ. Say not, "Depart in peace—be ye warmed and be ye filled," while you do nothing. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" for yourselves,—then, "tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord is king." Aspire to the honor of contributing to the Redeemer's glory,—aspire to the honor of holding up the hands and encouraging the hearts of the messengers of peace, and be nobly ambitious of doing *something* for which souls, now ignorant, wicked and degraded, will bless you in the day of Christ.

SERMON II.

DELIVERED IN CHRIST CHURCH, HARTFORD, BEFORE THE CONNECTICUT CHURCH SCHOLARSHIP SOCIETY, AUGUST 4TH, 1830.

BY THE REV. ALONZO POTTER.
Rector of St. Paul's Church, Boston.

ISAIAH, VI, 8. I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I, send me.

A voice like this which was heard by the Prophet, seems now addressed to us. At no period since the advent of Christ, has the demand for his ministers been more general or more urgent than at present. The whole world seems as a field whitening unto the harvest. Even Pagan nations tire of their superstition, and stand ready to turn from dumb idols, to serve the living God. The feet of them who publish the good tidings, are seen on their mountains, and are welcomed to their plains. The Bible proclaims in more than a hundred of their languages, the truth as it is in Jesus. Multitudes, too, in almost every christian land, awake from their long and disgraceful apathy—and feeling the worth of their religion, the claims of distant and benighted heathen, and the solemn import of the Saviour's last command, they call for agents who will dispense their charity through all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. At such a period the Lord seems to address his church in the words of the text, "*Whom shall I send, and who*

will go for us? Where is the zeal which will avail itself of these signal opportunities for extending christianity? Where are the high and various endowments so essential in one who acts as Ambassador for God? In whom is combined the learning—the intellectual discipline—the fertile invention—the prompt and persuasive eloquence, without which no Missionary on Heathen shores can duly maintain the honor of his master? Where is the patience under injury—the meekness in spite of contradiction—the perseverance which puts difficulty and danger at defiance—the self-sacrificing spirit which is ready to forsake all things for Christ and follow him even unto death? Or where is the individual possessing these qualities who is willing to consecrate them to the service of the Pagan—who is ready to quit home, and kindred, and the refinements of civilized society, to sit down amidst drifting snows and burning sands and barbarous hordes—who for the sake of the glory that is to follow, is ready to share in the shame and dishonor which cling to his Master's cross, and to take his place beside that Master, in an early and unhonored grave?—Yes methinks the voice of the Lord does say even now while we speak, "*Whom shall I send—and who will go for us?*"

And we hear this voice, not merely in view of the extension of christianity. We hear it too, when we look on lands already possessing this christianity. What, my friends, but formalism is the religion of multitudes on multitudes in this and other christian countries? What power does this religion, instinct as it is with all that can awe and allure the heart, exert even over its nominal disciples? Who does not feel, when he looks at the pains which every man is ready to expend on his farm or his merchandise, and compares with these the pains which are bestowed on an inheritance that is incorruptible—on an enterprize which puts at stake the *soul's* last and most precious hope—when on the one hand he sees the resistless power of the weapon which assails him, and marks on the other how feeble is the impression it

makes on his conscience and his heart; when again he considers how the forum and the senate-house speak to the sensibilities, and rouse into action the latent energies of men, while the pulpit, too often, sends forth its appeal year after year, without visible effect; when in fine he sees the intellectual and cultivated turning from the ministrations of the sanctuary with indifference or disgust, and presuming to look down on the faith they present, as devoid of truth, or undeserving consideration —who does not feel at such a time, that there is a call for purer and more powerful ministrations? What herald of the cross, be his powers ever so great, does not feel that the sword of the spirit needs to be wielded by a mightier arm, and carried home with a surer and more unfaltering aim than his own? Who does not, for himself and for his brethren, crave the possession of more commanding arguments, of more pungent and soul-stirring eloquence? Who does not pray for men who will go forth in the spirit and power of Elias; for men of intenser study, more generous zeal, and more humble fervent prayer; for men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, who will speak in tones that can be heard, and which being heard, shall be felt and obeyed. Here are children of pleasure, sold to the service of sense, and of sin! Whom shall God send, to break the spell by which they are enslaved, and set their souls at large? Here are men of talent and perverted literature; men who affect to despise the cross, and to look down with scorn, upon the meek and peaceful spirit of our religion! Where is the fearless and skilful ambassador, who will speak to them in the demonstration of the spirit and of power; who will make manifest the wisdom and power which are concentred in this cross of Christ, and cause them to feel, that even the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men! Here in fine, are immortal souls, chained to earth and immersed in the pursuit of gain or glory! Who will go in God's name and break in upon

their sordid dreams, and array before them the promises, the threatenings, and the retributions of an eternal world? *We speak unto you young men, for you are strong!* You enter the church at a time peculiarly auspicious to the exercise of an earnest and efficient ministry; you bring with you the versatility of youthful talent and the ardour of youthful zeal; you can bend your powers upon any point, and impart to them any assignable degree of discipline and force; to you then especially is this summons of the text addressed — *Whom shall I send—and who will go for us?*

But methinks there is another fact, in view of which this summons speaks to us in still louder tones. Christianity is not only to be extended to the dark places of superstition and idolatry. It is not only to be endued with new power, and invested with new dominion where it already reigns; but it is to be *sustained* in an age, and in a land which threaten it with extinction. Yes I say *sustained.* I insist not now on the duty of propagating it in foreign countries. I speak not now of the slight hold it has on the intellect and conscience, even of those who profess and call themselves Christians. But I say that this is the time, and here is the country, in which we may tremble even for the *existence of our faith.* I adopt not the rash calculations of the zealot, nor do I indulge in the groundless apprehensions of the faint-hearted But speaking the words of truth and soberness I do ask, is there nothing in our condition and prospects to justify evil-foreboding? Is not this, in the first place, an age of unexampled activity? Is not the human mind hurried forward by the passion for adventure and gain, at a rate which threatens to divert it from all sober and solemnizing thought? Are not the useful arts and sciences advancing with unprecedented speed, and must not a religion, which would control and guide them aright, move on with a speed still more unprecedented? To be stationary at such a crisis when all around is progressive—to be content with the

old rate of progress, or with the former channels of influence, when all else is quickened into such unwonted life and activity, is really to decline. At such a period, Christianity can sustain itself in no way, but by catching and transferring to its followers the enterprizing spirit of the age. If, then, we would not see our religion robbed even of its present power, if we would not see its sceptre, already so feeble, utterly broken, and its light, now so dim, fade away into total darkness, we must rise and quit ourselves like men. We must summon, round our altars, ministers whose hearts have been baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. We must multiply their number and see to it, that they are skillful workmen, rightly dividing the word of truth and needing not to be ashamed; heralds who will lift up the jubilee trumpet and cause its thrilling sounds to reverberate throughout the land; whose notes shall wax louder and louder as the din of human enterprize and the voice of human strife increases, and who shall be heard above all the sounds of commotion, and all the conflict of the moral elements, calling men to repent, and believe the gospel, and be saved!

And if there be a country, my friends, where this is peculiarly and pre-eminently necessary, it is our own. In many other lands population is stationary, and to keep pace with the progress of society there, Christianity needs not so much *more* heralds, as *better* ones. It needs that the character of its ministers should rise, but not perhaps that their numbers should be increased. But in ours how different! Such is the progress of population here, that were every individual within our limits, supplied at this moment with the ministrations of religion —still unless these ministrations were multiplied, there would be little less than half a million destitute, before the end of one year. Our numbers double in twenty years; so that even to keep religion relatively stationary with us, to keep the ratio between our population and our churches merely unchanged, it is

requisite that the number of these churches, should double in the same term. Such however, is not the case; and the consequence is that we are now, and, since the formation of our Republic, uniformly have been, *declining* in religious resources. This is a fact, my brethren, which cannot be winked out of sight. It is a fact which meets us, whenever we turn to the newly peopled parts of our land. It speaks to us from extensive districts even of the oldest states.* It beams forth, from every page and line of the report which the President of your society gave us of his missionary tour.† Indeed the single fact, that in a territory where fifty years since there were scarcely four thousand souls, four millions have now started into being, and that of these 3-4ths at least are without the means of grace and salvation—this alone were sufficient to show how fearful has been, not the want merely, but the *declension* of religion in our land. And when to this fact we add the consideration that here there are no secular barriers to arrest this declension; no prescriptive influence to sustain or perpetuate religion; when we consider how heresies which nothing but argument can vanquish, are thriving at the West and South, with the most rank and fatal luxuriance; when, in fine, we remember that the hearts even of a whole people can easily wax gross, and their ears become dull of hearing, and that then all the efforts of benevolence to enlighten and reclaim them, must prove unavailing—at such a moment, we say, when christianity has so little power, and when even that power is in danger of being prostrated by the swelling tide of population, and the still more fearful torrent of corruption and sin, who shall wonder that we tremble for the spiritual destinies of our country? Is there no ground for apprehension? Is there no ground for apprehension, when the political ascend-

* It has been estimated, that 500 ministers are now wanting in the States of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and not less than 300 in New England. In the more southern States, the want is of course much greater.

† Rt. Rev. Dr Brownell. See the Report of his visit to the Western States, made at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Dom. and For. Miss. Soc. of the P. E. Church, May, 1830.

ancy of our Republic is fast passing* into hands which feel not the restraints of christianity? Is there no ground for apprehension, when (unless new and more adequate efforts are made to avert such a catastrophe) the lapse of only half a century will find two-thirds of our whole population destitute of its institutions, and despising its authority? Is there no ground for apprehension when the very principles for which our forefathers toiled, the principles of civil religious liberty, the principles of order, intelligence and morality, are in danger of being extinguished by the spirit of licentiousness? Yes, my brethren, we do well to tremble. Now, if ever, there is need of vigorous and enlightened effort, in behalf of our country, and our Saviour. The call is from Heaven; the call is for servants of the living God; the call is for men of bold hearts and well-trained minds; for men fitted to cope with the subtle spirit of infidelity as well as with the reckless appetites for pleasure and for gold; for men who looking over vast fields already white unto the harvest, and seeing the demand for labourers, shall go like the Prophet, and say, here Lord are *we*, send us; for men in fine who with hearts knit together as the heart of one man shall breast themselves against the rising flood of ungodliness, which threatens to desolate the fair places of our heritage—who feeling that, if christianity must fall, it will be their highest honour to fall beneath its ruins—who prizing their Saviour above all price, holding substance, and fame, and even life, cheap when weighed against his cause, shall say with Thomas, *Let us go, that if need be we may die with him!*

The call, we say is for such men, and for many such. And this call, my brethren, addresses itself especially to us. We are members of a church which we profess to regard as the pillar and ground of the truth; a church possessing a divinely con-

* It has been ascertained, that more than half the whole number of ministers in the United States are in New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, while more than two thirds of the whole population are south and west of those States. It is obvious, therefore, that the numerical ascendancy is already with those who are, and long have been, destitute of Christian ministrations; and that this destitution is greatest where the population is most rapidly increasing.

stituted ministry, a scriptural and fervid liturgy, and articles of faith, conspicuous alike for their fulness and their simplicity; a church which taking its stand midway between the phrenzies of enthusiasm, and the languor of indifference, spreads out its goodly shadow, and invites all who are weary to come and be at rest. It is a church which breathes through all its institutions an earnest solicitude for the souls of men, and which, in the parent country, has ever been found foremost in bearing to those who are in darkness the light of Redemption. It is a church in fine, which is just emerging from the clouds of prejudice and hostility cast around it, partly by its own unfaithfulness, and partly by political events; which is fast becoming an object of good will to all parts of our land, and the ministrations of which are now called for, not only in the rising cities and villages of the West, but through many a district and in many a hamlet of this home of the Pilgrims. To us then as members of such a communion; urged by the double motive of love to our Master and devotion to our church; regarding the maintainance and diffusion of our sentiments not only as important, but as involving the very existence, in their integrity, of primitive truth and order—to us above all others this call of the text is addressed. Whom shall I send, and who will go for me, saith this voice of the Lord, to *us!* Where among *you*, are the gifted and pious youth, who will consecrate to this cause their rising energy and ambition? Where is the generous spirit of martyrdom which shrinks not from any sacrifice, which counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, which esteems no post too humble, no toil too severe, if through it, the cross may triumph and souls be saved? Where, O! where, within your pale is the goodly company of prophets, the heroic band of Apostles who will go forth in the spirit of Paul, and Peter, and Elijah; who will respond to every invitation, which is made for the services of their church; who will occupy each vacant point along the frontiers of Heathen dark-

ness; who in short will compass this whole earth in the length thereof, and in the breadth thereof, and never rest till on every mountain, and in every valley shall be found out a place for the temple of the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

Brethren, the question is asked; and I cannot reflect without grief and humiliation, on the answer which must be made. This church, which numbers at present, about 500 congregations; which embraces a proportion of wealth and intelligence unusually large; and which is bent professedly on the propagation of her own tenets, yes this church with her primitive institutions, her evangelical liturgy, and her missionary spirit—is sending into the ranks of the christian ministry annually, but TWENTY-FOUR MEN.* Of these one half are requisite to supply the breaches occasioned by death, and other vicissitudes; so that to stem the mighty wave of population in our land, to contend with a growing and wide spread licentiousness, and to lift up the standard of Christ on Heathen shores, there remain but twelve, who are furnished and equipped by us. And these twelve, if we examine our ecclesiastical records will be found to be—not the sons of Episcopal parents, not youth originally intended and trained up for our ministry—but individuals who have been brought into our fold by the pressing demand for labourers which it exhibits, and who owe the adoption of our sentiments not so much to any influence exerted by us, as to their own free and voluntary choice.† The real truth then is, that as a church we barely rear ministers sufficient to keep our walls from dilapidation; that we do not even provide enough to extend these walls with the extension of population; that if they

* See the ordinations, reported in the Journals of the General Convention, for 1826 and 1829. See also, an article under date of Aug. 7th, 1830, in the Episcopal Watchman; the writer of which, though reasoning on different data, arrives at the same conclusion.

† It has been questioned whether this statement is authorized by facts. The author can only say, that it is authorized by such as are within the sphere of his own observation, and has not been thought exaggerated by several judicious friends whom he has consulted.

are thus extended we must ascribe it rather to the spontaneous aid of others than to our own exertions: while for the suffering cause of Christ in our own land, and the rescue of immortal souls in other lands, we do as a community, *absolutely nothing!* Yes, here is the spectacle of a church, boasting its primitive order, confident of its ultimate triumph over all other forms of christianity; a church which prays God to make his ways known upon earth, his saving health unto all nations, which teaches its members to ask daily that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may shine forth upon all lands, and that they who have received it may live as becomes it: and yet this church sits down in supineness; does nothing to achieve this triumph, for which it longs; does nothing to commend, or make known these institutions, of which it boasts; does nothing in fine to hasten on that kingdom of Christ, for which it so often and so earnestly prays.

My brethren, we speak here advisedly. We do not venture upon conjecture. We present you the result of a careful, and we believe an accurate examination. The question then arises "whence is this!" Whence is it, that we make no worthier response to the demands of our age, and the claims of our Saviour? Upon whom shall this delinquency be charged? We may, in reply to this question, implicate others, as we will. We may specify causes ever so many, or so various. We may complain that the rising generation is deficient in zeal. We may enumerate circumstances, which tend to divert our youth from the sacred profession. But never, my friends, shall we reach the true cause till we find it in ourselves; till we feel that to no little extent the guilt is our own, that the responsibility of such a failure rests on each individual of the church, and that it becomes each one therefore, in view of it, to confess that he has sinned, and come short of his duty. Yes, had each member of our communion cherished the spirit of Isaiah, had he been ready when the call came forth from God ambassdors for

to go in his name, to say, *here am I, send me, or send one whom I will help to train and equip for the high service;* had he felt as an individual, that he was a debtor to this cause, and that to the utmost of his ability he would discharge this debt, we should not be lamenting now, over facts so opprobrious. And though each one had not felt this, though thousands had continued inactive and indifferent as they now are; yet had *we* my brethren, (few though we be,) done our duty; had we added our exertions, to those which have been made by others in this behalf; had we devoted to this cause offerings proportioned to its magnitude, or to our own ability, who does not see that the result to day would have been less humiliating in fact, and unspeakably less painful to us. The cause of our deficiency, then must be sought in ourselves. It is idle to look for it elsewhere. It must be sought, in the want of proper attention on our part, to the religious culture of the young. It must be sought, in the absence of proper exertions to discover and train up for the sacred office, youth of piety and promise. It must be sought, finally, in the want of some organization by which in furthering this cause, exertion can be concentrated, and interest fostered.

I. It must be sought, *first in the want of due attention on our part to the religious culture of the young.* It were needless to maintain here, that as no man can be fitted for the sacred office without piety, so while destitute of piety, few will be tempted to enter it. In this country, it holds out no lure to avarice, and offers but few temptations to indolence or unholy ambition. Whatever therefore, affects the piety of the rising generation, must affect the number of candidates for the clerical profession. And it is here, if we mistake not, that you will find one great secret of that dearth of labourers, which you so loudly and deeply deplore. If parents had been faithful to their offspring; if the church had remembered, what it owes to those children, who have been taken into its arms, and have received its maternal blessing; and if sponsors had not neglected to put

these children in mind, what a solemn vow, promise and profession has been made in their name—in such case, I say there could have been no deficiency of labourers. Early impressions are controlling and permanent; and had these impressions been thoroughly religious; had the opening minds of our children been greeted with the lessons of Christian instruction; had they been taught what they owe to their Saviour, and to those for whom that Saviour died; had they in short, been made to know and to feel the dignity of going forth in the name of Christ, and diffusing the riches of his grace—it cannot be, my friends, that so many would have shrunk from this sacred and honorable service. It cannot be, but that multitudes would have been found eager for a place at the Holy Altar, and burning for permission to preach to perishing Pagans even, the gospel of peace. But as it is, who can wonder that churches languish, and the ways of Zion mourn? Do parents think it enough, that they carry their infant offspring to the font of Baptism; that they have them named in the name of Christ, and signed with the sign of his cross? Do they think it amply sufficient, if in addition to this they are "taught to say the creed, the Lord's prayer and the ten commandments;" are trained to repeat the shibboleth of party and to adhere with unfaltering pertinacity to the forms of their church? Are no pains taken to "instruct them sufficiently in the other parts of the church catechism, set forth for that purpose;" "to teach them all things which they ought to know and believe to their souls health;" and to make this teaching, practical in its influence and all-pervading and controlling in its power? Do *sponsors* forget that it is "their parts and duties, to see that these infants be taught so soon as they are able to learn" their high responsibilities and privileges; that they be shielded with tender and unremitting assiduity, from the snares and perils of this evil world; and that they be so virtuously brought up to lead a goodly and a Christian life, that when they are old, they shall not depart from it?* Yes, these adopted offspring of the

* See Baptismal Service for Children.

church, these members of Christ, and inheriters of the kingdom of Heaven, are they educated as children of the world, initiated into all its fashions, and perverted tastes, and given up to be votaries of its pleasures and its sordid ambition? Is there no earnest and persevering effort to root out from their infant minds the seeds of evil, and to imbue them with the affections and hopes of another, and a better world? Who then shall wonder, that so few of them are candidates for the ministry? Who shall wonder, that they shrink from the toil and self-denial of the *Missionary* life? And while these things continue, who can expect it to be otherwise? Brethren, we may found scholarships! We may rear Theological halls, and endow Theological professorships! We may sound aloud the wants of our church, and conjure young men, as they prize their religion, and compassionate the souls of sinful men, to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. But if they want the heart; if they have no real love for their Redeemer, or their fellow-men, who can hope that they will come—or who would prize them if they did? No! If we would lay the axe to the root of the tree; if we would begin at the beginning, and touch this evil at its source, we must turn to our *children*. It must be our hearts desire, and first prayer in their behalf to God, that they may be saved. We must feel that all other endowments are worthless, compared with that wisdom which cometh down from above! We must dedicate them from the womb, and with our whole souls, to God; take them early to Christ, that he may *touch* them with his transforming and renovating grace; and through the whole course of their education, we must remember that we are dealing with young immortals, that their home is in Heaven, and that it is in our power not only to train them for its felicities, but to make them instruments in the hands of the Spirit for turning many to righteousness. Yes, we must remember that in the judgment of the Bible and the church, the spiritual desti-

nies of the young are at our disposal, and that wo must betide the man who is unfaithful! We must begin with the first dawnings of intellect! We must labour that the earliest aspirations of the heart be devoted to the Lord and to his Christ! We must see to it that a hallowed and hallowing influence prevails in the nursery and parlour; that it goes forth with our children to the school and the play ground; and that it does not desert them when they enter the academy or the college. Here brethren, are the fountains whence must flow those streams, which are to make glad the city of our God. These fountains then, let us commend to the care of Almighty God. Oh, that he would cast salt into all their depths and recesses! Oh, that he would pour out a regenerating spirit upon all our seminaries of learning—making them places of prayer, and sanctifying them with the choisest influences of our Religion! Oh, that parents, and sponsors, and sunday school instructers might awake to a sense of their responsibilities; that Baptism might cease to be a form; that religious education, might become a reality rather than a name; and that each individual might resolve before God that the guilt shall not be his, if the rising generation are not all trained up in the the fear of God, and if multitudes of them are notmade meet and willing for the service of his altar.

II. But to be meet for this service, something more is requisite than piety. There must be *intellectual power;* the power which can result from nothing but the discipline of study, and the possession of learning. It was Paul, the most cultivated of all his Apostles, the only one who had been trained up at the feet of worldly science; that our Lord selected, even in an age of miracles, to bear his name before the Gentiles. It was Paul too, who writing to the ministry of his own time, declared that a Bishop should not be a novice; that he ought to give attendance to reading, meditate upon the things that he had heard, and give himself wholly to them. How obvious then, that in this age when the spirit of inspiration is sealed up, and when talent and learning are almost idolized, nothing can sustain the

pulpit but intellectual power. But from the discipline, by which such power is developed, many a youth of piety and genius is debarred. He burns perhaps with desire to be numbered among the sacramental host of God's elect; but he has been born and cradled in obscurity, and when he sees the difficulties which beset his way, his ardour is checked, his hopes expire. If ever he enters this host, if ever he is properly prepared to share in its labours, it must be owing to the aid and encouragement of others. As there can be no faith without hearing, and no hearing without a preacher, so in a thousand instances there can be no preacher without patronage, and christian liberality. At least one third of those who occupy the pulpits of our land, or quit its shores as heralds of light and salvation, are the offspring of such liberality. Yes, among the most eminent and useful of our clergy, are men who have felt the paralyzing weight of poverty, and who but for the voice of christian kindness and the offerings of Christian munificence, which cheered them on their way, would never have aspired to this office; or would have buried their aspirations in silence and despair. Now, is this a charity in behalf of which we make but little exertion? Are we at no pains to search out and bring forward youth who may become the ornament and support of the church? Do we look for our clergy to those classes of society, where the self-denying spirit of the ministry is, (alas that it should be so) the least fostered? Do we forget that it is as much our duty to aid youth in preparing for this service, as it is to sustain them when they enter it; that the same reasoning, which proves that no one anxious to preach the gospel and competent to the task, ought to be prevented by lack of support, proves also, that no talented and devoted youth, anxious to enter the sacred office ought to be debarred by the want of aid? Do we forget in short, that to enlist and train up soldiers of the cross, is an integral part of the *missionary* enterprize; that in doing this we are contributing as essentially to the extension of our faith as when we aid in support of Bible or Missionary societies; and in-

deed that in the present state of the church, it is a part of the enterprize without which all the rest must languish and fail. Brethren, so long as these obvious truths are forgotten, we need not wonder that though the harvest is great the labourers are few. We need not wonder, that demands which are made for the services of our church in every quarter of the land, are made in vain. We neglect the means, and how then can we hope to attain the end? We wait for young men to force their way to the portals of our ministry, when it is our duty to search them out, and guide them with a kind and friendly hand! We suffer many a child of promise in our Sunday Schools, and Bible classes, to be ensnared by temptation, or bound over to secular pursuits, when had we interposed, he might have become a burning and shining light in the sanctuary!

On this subject, however, I would not be mistaken. In recommending provisions for the education of indigent youth, I have in view no profuse and improvident expenditure—no expenditure, which, while it taxes heavily the treasury of the Lord, would hold out an unholy lure to the ministry. It is one of the blessings of our land, that the labours of the clergy meet here but a slender reward, and that they present, therefore, less than in other lands, inducements of a secular nature to those who undertake them. It is a blessing also, though not peculiar to our land, that many can enter this profession, only through the straight gate of toil and self-denial. Indigent in their circumstances; early called to struggle with opposition, and to combat perpetual and ever-varying difficulty; brought into intimate contact with minds of various texture, and habituated to constant excitement and collision, they acquire by such means an energy of purpose, a readiness of resource, and a knowledge of human character, which to the christian minister are invaluable. We deprecate therefore, any provisions which would supersede in their case, the necessity of such exertion. Instead of removing it from the poor, we would if possible impose it on the rich. We would

remove nothing, but the doubt and despondency which are apt to gather round the spirits of the indigent and unfriended. We would extend no aid, except for the purpose of teaching and enabling the student to sustain himself. We would provide, if possible, a system of self-support; a system in which the scholar shall render in manual or intellectual labour something like an equivalent for the assistance he receives; a system in which, uniting perpetual effort with rigid economy, he may foster the habits of industry and self-denial, so essential in a clergyman; may save himself from debt on the one hand, and from dependence on the other; may acquire or preserve physical vigour sufficient to encounter the toils of his profession; and may be prepared in every respect to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Such a system we rejoice to see, is finding its way into many of our schools and colleges; and we trust that the time is near, when the zeal and liberality of churchmen, will bring it to bear on the enterprize now before us.

III. It was my intention, to have dwelt at some length on the want of *associated effort* among us in behalf of this cause, as another reason why it thus languishes. This intention, however, I must relinquish. Time will only permit me to remark, that without such effort, neither piety in the rising generation, nor liberality on the part of our churches, can fully secure the wished for result. In great enterprizes, individual man is weak. It is not till associated with his fellows, that he becomes all but omnipotent. Resources, which if scattered abroad at the discretion of individuals, would be wasted, have only to be gathered into one channel, and moved by one impulse, to produce mighty and irresistable effect. Even, where deep interest has been awakened, this is true. How much more true is it where this interest is still to be aroused—where information is to be collected—where measures are to be devised, and the public mind guided to some fixed and useful result. It is in view of this fact that we hailed the formation of the Church Scholarship Society at first, and that we now rejoice in its extended and

extending prosperity. We trust that the zeal which inspires it will be caught by other districts of our country, and that the time is not distant, when every diocese will number among its institutions, one devoted to the same objects. And may we add the hope, that these will not be merely local associations, formed without respect to the general wants of the church, and for the narrow purpose of sectional advantage; but that constituted on similar principles, and devoted to one great and common end, they will unite their movements, and operate under the patronage and supervision of the highest council of our church.

We have thus briefly adverted to the causes, or some of the causes, which prevent the increase of our ministry. These causes it is obvious, may all be resolved into the single one we have already named; the want, that is, of the spirit which animated the prophet, or the want, in other words, and to use the language of our day, of the true *Missionary spirit*. By such a spirit, I do not mean the miserable counterfeit which sometimes usurps its name. I do not mean the spirit of emulation, which impels a church to cultivate missions, on the same principle that the magicians of Egypt performed their miracles; merely because their rivals cultivate and profit by them. I do not mean the spirit of proselytism, which sends forth Missionaries to proclaim the dogmas of a sect, rather than to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. I do not mean, in fine, the enthusiasm, which taking its rise in the fervours of imagination, and fostered by the restlessness of the age in which we live, delights in vast and visionary schemes. No! when I name the Missionary spirit, I mean the pure and steady flame, which burned in the bosoms of a Peter, and a Paul; I mean that inextinguishable love of man, which has its rise in nothing but a paramount love for God; I mean that benevolence, which called the Son of God from his throne of glory, and brought him to earth, to bleed and die, and which causes every heart in which it dwells, to melt with compassion over the woes and sins of alienated man. Such we trust is the spirit which begins to pervade and

animate our own church. If it is, if this zeal in behalf of missions of which we hear so much, has been kindled by the author of all grace; if it is sustained and nurtured on the part of those who profess it, by prayer, and by faith; then we bid it God speed. Let it be diffused throughout our borders, and it will not merely furnish funds to establish Missionary stations,—not merely raise the standard of piety among our people,—not merely infuse into the hearts of our youth an ambition to become soldiers of the cross,—but it will organize measures and supply funds to train this soldiery; it will enlist in its ranks many a hardy spirit who would otherwise have been lost, and it will never rest till a host has been enrolled, equal to all the demands of Christ, and all the exigencies of his church.

But how can this zeal be diffused through our borders, but by being first diffused through each individual heart? No man can be friendly to its extension, my brethren, who shuts it out from his own breast. No man can be sincerely anxious to see Missionaries go forth to distant lands, or to destitute portions of our own, who does nothing to prepare them for their labours. If we are in earnest in this cause, we must have done with sloth and prevarication. When called upon to labour in its behalf, we must not feign excuses of inability, or feel that since we are unable to do much, we need do nothing. We must not put in a plea that we are insignificant and useless—a plea which though it savours of humility is the real offspring of pride and indifference. No! let us feel our insignificance when we kneel before God in prayer; let us feel our insignificance when we presume to go forth to any duty in the spirit of self-dependence; but when we go forth relying on the grace of God to sustain and help us, then let us feel that we are mighty, that we can do all things through him, that strengtheneth us. Let us feel that so long as life is spared, we are bound to labour for the extension of the gospel; and if we cannot take an important part in this enter-

prize, let us imitate the sainted Elliot, who in the last hours of a most useful and noble life, when he could no longer labour in his accustomed vocation, was found teaching an Indian child its alphabet. Yes! let us be willing to occupy the humblest, meanest post, remembering that any service to our Master, is better than none, and remembering too, that on the fidelity with which the smallest trust is discharged may depend the fate of our cause. It was the maxim of a celebrated general of antiquity, that each soldier ought to regard himself in battle as important; as bearing in fact, its issue at his disposal. And it is a maxim, which in this age of the church, ought to be adopted by every christian. The standard which the captain of our salvation unfurls, and which marshal us on to conflict and to victory, bears an inscription similar to that which once sent enthusiasm through the hosts of a British fleet;—*The church expects every man to do his duty; every man*, no matter how lowly his rank, or scanty his resources. The eye of the Saviour is bent on each individual heart. No evasion, no indifference can escape his omniscient glance, or be erased from his indefectible memory. O brethren! as we would escape his anger, and secure that favor of his, which is life, and that loving kindness of his which is better than life, let us be faithful; let us be faithful even unto death. Let us think what we *ought* to do for him, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. Let us think what we *might* do were we to retrench our superfluities, forego some of our indulgences and practice that self-denial which distinguished the first disciples of Christ. Let us think what we shall *wish* we had done, when we come to stand before God in judgment; and as the claims of the church, and the world come up before us; as we seem to hear that voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us," let the answer of the prophet break from our inmost hearts—Here Lord are *we*, *send us*.

SERMON III.

BY THE RT. REV. ALEXANDER VIETS GRISWOLD, D. D.
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CHARITY.

I CORINTHIANS, XIII. 13.

NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.

When we consider what is said in many parts of the Scriptures, and especially in the writings of this Apostle of faith; how excellent in its nature, and how very essential to the christian character; how powerful to renew the heart, and overcome the world; what have been its glorious achievements; how many, through faith, "have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises,—and out of weakness have been made strong;" when it is considered, that by faith we are justified, and accounted righteous before God, we may well, at the first thought, wonder that any virtue or grace—that even charity should be *greater*. But it should be also considered, that some things are highly important, and indispensably necessary, not so much for their own sake, or intrinsic worth, as for their fruits; or as the means of obtaining what is essentially and permanently good. In erecting a building, no part is more necessary than the scaffolding; and yet, no sooner is the edifice completed, than the scaffolding is useless. So it is with *faith* and *hope*; without faith, it is not possible to please God, or to be saved in Christ; without faith, the spiritual temple could

not be erected. Without hope, none would be strong to labor; the *hands would hang down*, and the *knees be feeble*. But charity is the strength and beauty of the edifice. By charity "all the building in Christ, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord," and "maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." The superior excellence of this virtue, is every where seen in the word of God; but no where more clear and full than in this chapter before us.

In the chapter preceding, the Apostle had treated of the diversity of gifts bestowed upon the Church; and he exhorts christians earnestly to desire the best gifts; to seek and to pray for those most profitable. "And yet (in the last verse he adds) shew I unto you a more excellent way." He would shew what is more necessary and useful in christian life, than the gifts of which he had been discoursing. And the way he shews is worthy of this high praise; for it is to "follow after charity." Having shown that without charity, or, which is the same thing, christian love, all other gifts, and graces, and works will avail us nothing; having proved, from its nature and fruits, that it is pure and heavenly; and, also, that its continuance and its blessings are not confined to this present world, but will extend through the boundless ages of futurity, he comes to this conclusion: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." *These* THREE are what most essentially constitute the christian character. During this state of trial, and while God's Church is militant on earth, they must all *abide;* while the world continues will *these* remain, the most distinguishing characteristics of a christian disciple. Faith is the element of godliness,—the grand principle of spiritual life; it is "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." By faith we come to God through Christ. By faith the merits of his cross cleanse us from sin, and our religious performances are reckoned to us for righteousness. By faith, Christians "endure as seeing him who is invisible."

Hope is the comforting assurance that God's mercies in Jesus Christ are extended to us particularly; hope looks forward, through the eye of faith, to a glorious recompense of reward; to things—to joys and blessedness which human eye has not seen, and exceeding all that the heart can conceive, or the tongue express. It is by hope, that the faithful christian is enabled, as a good soldier of Christ, to endure a fight of afflictions, knowing that the greatest sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.

But charity is greater than either; charity is the image of God renewed in the heart; it is the perfect man,—the complete stature of the fulness of Christ. "God is love;" he that loveth is born of God, and doeth his will; love worketh no ill to man; it is the new commandment of Christ, and the fulfilling of the whole law. Charity is that holy, virtuous, heavenly principle, which the Gospel is intended to restore within us, and till we possess it, we cannot be truly christians. And that this charity or love is greater than faith, or hope, or any other gift, or grace, or virtue, the apostle makes evident; first, from its necessity to the christian character; secondly, from its good fruits; and lastly, from its durability. Let us, for our present improvement, view the course of his argument, and his manner of establishing this momentous doctrine.

I. How indispensably *necessary* charity is to the christian character, he has, briefly indeed, but very strongly, shown in the first three verses of this chapter: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,—" though a man were possessed of more than human eloquence; though he speak of God, and Christ, and religion, seemingly by inspiration, "and have not charity, he becomes as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal;" he is like the pipes of an organ, or other instrument of music, destitute of vital piety; they may utter sweet, harmonious sounds in the praise of God, but are themselves cold and insensible.

"And though a man have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge—" though he should study well, and commit to memory the whole sacred volume, and be ready and apt, on every occasion, to cite or explain the scriptures; give a man all the learning that schools and seminaries can bestow; let him be ever so deeply versed in abstruse science and systematic theology; "and though he have all faith, so that he can remove mountains"— though he have the most undoubting belief in divine revelation, and is able to work miracles, and in Christ's name to "cast out devils, and do many wonderful works;" yet if he "have not charity, he is nothing." His gifts are abused; his knowledge is vain; and his faith is dead, being alone.

And though he does works—even the greatest of works; "though he bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned—" though he lay down his life,—suffer martyrdom for the sake of religion; if it be done from worldly motives; if he is liberal to please men, or gain applause; if he suffers death through obstinacy or pride; in a word, "if he have not charity it profiteth him nothing." Such works may be beneficial to mankind, and they who do them shall verily have the reward they seek for; but if these works are not wrought from benevolent principles,—if the heart is not influenced by the love of God, and good will towards men, in his sight they will not be approved; they avail nothing towards eternal life; they are not the works which have promise of "reward in heaven." And thus does the Apostle shew that the most splendid gifts,—the most shining graces, and the most popular works, without this heavenly principle of christian love, will be unprofitable.

II. Having thus shown the necessity of charity, he proceeds to its qualities; and as all virtues are best known by their *fruits*, in the next four verses he evinces the superior excellence of charity from its good effects. "Charity *suffereth long*." Patience is one of its distinguishing features. It bears pains with

fortitude; afflictions with submission; and injuries without resentment. It "is *kind;*" it has bowels of mercy; a tender sympathy for others; ever ready and glad to aid and oblige; it weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with those who rejoice. "Charity *envieth not;*" on the contrary, it promotes and rejoices in the good and prosperity of others. "It *vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*" It thinks not of itself more highly than it ought to think, but is meek and humble, esteeming others better than itself. If a man has this love in his heart, no gifts, or talents, or attainments can elate him with pride, or make him vain; he despises no man, and yet he is a slave to no human opinion; he is content, if he can approve himself to God.

"Charity doth not behave itself *unseemly.*" It causes the Christian to pay all due regard to decency and appearances, lest its good should be evil spoken of. It corrects the manners, and regulates the whole deportment, according to what is fit and seemly in every state of life. It renders men affable and courteous in their intercourse, and preserves them from a thousand improprieties, to which pride, and selfishness, and other undisciplined passions subject men. For we are further taught that charity "*seeketh not its own,*" in such a way as willingly to disregard, and much less to injure the rights, or to diminish the happiness of other people. The christian rule is, "to love your neighbour as yourself, and to do to all men, as you would that they should do unto you;" and by the observance of this rule is charity distinguished. They who possess this love are "*not easily provoked.*" Though they live in this wicked world, where "it must needs be that offences come," and continually do come, they bear and forbear. Sensible of their own infirmities, and knowing that perfection belongs not to man, in this fallen state, they desire chiefly to cast out the beam from their own eye; they look to the example of their persecuted Saviour, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again;

when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously ;" like him, they endeavour to " overcome evil with good ;" they are more willing to forgive a wrong, than to avenge it.

" Charity *thinketh no evil ;*" it inclines the disciple of Christ to judge favorably of the deeds and the characters of men. It hopes to find, and inclines to believe that others are blameless ; and as far as truth will admit, imputes their conduct to good, rather than to evil motives. " It *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*" The heart which is ruled by this love is grieved by the prevalence of vice and sin ; it is glad when men do well, whether friends or foes. When piety or godliness increases, and when true religion is advanced, whoever may be the subjects of its power, or the instruments of its propagation, charity rejoices. In few words, love " beareth" or rather *covereth* " all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things," which a man, and which a christian ought to *conceal*, to *believe*, to *hope*, and to *endure*.

In this the Apostle's beautiful description of the fruits of charity, its nature and excellence, are evident. It is indeed not uncommon to give the name of charity to some one of its fruits or features. Almsgiving, for instance, is often honored with the name of charity, and no one deed can better deserve the name. But it is possible that a man may " give all his goods to feed the poor, and have not charity ;" not be possessed of this true christian love. This indeed is true, that as the Apostle says, " charity is kind ;" they who possess it will have pity upon the poor, and will, according as they are able, give to those who need. But it is not equally true that all who are liberal have charity : men may give bountifully from worldly motives.

So it is said that " charity thinketh no evil ;" but it does not follow that charity is blind : or that we have not charity for those whom we think to be faulty. You may not be deficient in charity towards one whom you think the worst of sinners, and a

profligate: his wickedness may be so evident that you cannot reasonably think otherwise of him,—if you wish him to be reformed and good and happy, and are ready to do your duty in promoting his welfare, this is to be charitable. And you may not have charity for one whom you think the best of men; you may envy his prosperity; you may wish him less perfect and rejoice in his disgrace. Charity is no respecter of persons; it is like the Divine love, extended to all. It has God himself for its primary object, and in imitation of His perfections, it embraces the whole human family; in imitation of Him who "makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust," charity inclines us to bless and do good to those who speak against and injure us; to "be perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect."

III. The Apostle having thus shewn the necessity and the excellent fruits of charity, proceeds to speak of its *duration*. "Charity never faileth;" in which it is greater than faith or hope, or any other spiritual gift: for "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." Though now the Gospel is preached, and prophecies are explained and applied, the period is swiftly approaching, when this dispensation shall cease; every prophecy shall be accomplished, and every scripture fulfilled—"Whether there be tongues they shall cease;" all the gifts of miracles and inspiration shall be discontinued. In the glorified state of the Church there will be no confusion of speech or diversity of languages; but there shall be one heart, and one voice to all. "Whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away." All those various means and arts which now we use to discover truth and obtain knowledge, will give place to a glorious certainty, and the boasted wisdom of the world will be found foolishness and vanity. "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part." Very imperfect, and extremely limited are the views and the knowledge which at best we can obtain in this life. While we preach to you the unsearchable mysteries of God, we

must confess our ignorance of many things, and that all we now know is but very little in comparison of what shall in a future state appear. But charity is not thus fading and transitory; this *never faileth.* Other gifts and graces help our infirmities and supply our weakness; but charity is permanent.

St. Paul illustrates his subjects by the state of childhood. In that state we are captivated with toys and trifles; our desires and conversations are frivolous and unprofitable. But when we arrive at maturity of understanding, we are ashamed of these *childish things*, and we *put them away.* And this present life is the childhood of our existence; hereafter we shall be brought, by superior knowledge, to view as very trivial and vain, many of the things which now we highly prize; then shall we look back upon our highest attainments, in this world, as comparatively a state of ignorance and folly. But charity is still an exception; the same christian love which inspires the hearts of God's people, and unites them here in the bond of perfectness, shall still unite them in a better world. Here "we walk by *faith*, and not by sight;" but the time is approaching when "we shall know, even as we are known." Heavenly things we now contemplate and view with the eye of faith, as afar off, and we can only *hope* to enjoy them. This faith and this hope will pass away, and be swallowed up in knowledge and certainty; in heaven we shall "see face to face, and know even as also we are known." But no such change shall take place in regard to charity, which is, like the soul, immortal. This shall never fail. This divine principle, which gives peace on earth, shall with the soul be translated to its native skies, and constitute, no doubt, our chief felicity in heaven.

"Now then (most certainly) abideth faith, hope, charity; these three" virtues are in this life all essential to the christian character. Without *these*, we cannot live as christians, nor attain to immortal life. "But the greatest of these is charity." *The greatest*, because as we have seen, *the most necessary;* for this

the others are given; and without this they are nothing. *Greatest*, because in its nature and fruits it is of *superior excellence;* this more than all others promotes "glory to God on high, and on earth peace and good will towards men." *Greatest*, also, because most *durable*. Faith and hope will soon give place to certainty; but love will increase and shine forever. Love is the end and perfection of every virtue and grace. It is the point to which the others lead; the common centre in which they all unite. Even faith and hope are designed and above all things they tend to make us perfect in love; they are the sacred scaffolding, by which alone we can be built up a holy temple unto God, or be *edified in love*. This principle of charity was lost by sin; it is the image of God which is restored by the work of redemption. For this (by faith to renew our hearts in love) Christ lived, and for this he died. This did he teach in his preaching and ministry. This is the new commandment which he gives unto us, that we love one another; in this he sums up the law and the prophets, and shews that "the end of the commandment is charity." For what purpose do we *believe* in Christ rather than to follow the example of his benevolence? What is the end of our *hope*, but to be united with the whole universal Church in the holy exercise and perfect fruition of love? Faith and hope are chiefly profitable, as they lead to this blessed end. Here they *abide*, and here they ought to abide, firmly established in our hearts, till we have passed this vale of sorrows; till we attain to those blissful realms where love forever reigns. Here we cannot spiritually live without them. The one is the life, and the other the nourishment of our christian state. Faith keeps us in the right road, and hope strengthens us on the journey; but charity is the mantle which shields us from the storm, and the treasure which shall be our endless portion. All the doctrines and all the duties of religion, every commandment and every ordinance of the gospel, are intended, and they are calculated to inspire our hearts, and fill our souls with love; to eradicate every malev-

olent passion from our breasts; to banish hatred, strife and enmity from the world, and to cherish every friendly feeling, every benevolent affection, every kind and charitable office. As all the natural colors, blended together in due proportion, produce the purest white; so is charity a proportionate combination of every christian grace.

And what though the seed of the gospel does not always, though faithfully sown, produce this heavenly principle? What if kingdom still rise against kingdom, and nations called christian, engage in bloody conflict? Or if in smaller social circles the leaven of malice remain; if the storms of discord and contention overspread the horizon of domestic life; remember that these evils are not, as some would have it believed, owing to christianity, but to the want of it. The seed is good; but the soil needs cultivation; thorns and briers are permitted to grow and overtop the tender plants of charity. We need no other gospel; but too many need that which they profess. God gives us religion, as he gives the earth, that we should cultivate and make it fruitful. If it prove barren or unproductive, the fault is not in the gift: it is our own negligence and folly: we have the form without the power of godliness. While faith is dead, hope will languish, and charity will yield to selfishness and pride.

Let us then gladly and carefully attend to the apostle's inference, and "follow after charity," without which our gifts and talents and experience are nothing. Whatever men may claim or boast or think, by charity chiefly are we known to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

But though no gifts will avail us without charity, let it be well considered that many are necessary to our attaining it, and none more necessary than faith and hope. What can lay so sure a foundation of love;—what can so expand the heart with benevolence, as a belief in Christ,—what he has done—what he has suffered to save our souls? By the eye of faith do we behold him, for us men, and for our salvation, clothed in humanity, and an Advocate for sinners! Behold him continually exercised in deeds of benevolence and mercy! dispensing

the words of life: extending his healing hand, and life-giving power, now to the bodies, and now to the minds of men;—reproving the wicked,—reclaiming the wanderers; comforting the afflicted; giving sight to the blind, and binding up the broken heart. Whether we behold him in the desert, feeding thousands with a few loaves and fishes; or satisfying the hungry with the more excellent bread of eternal life; whether we see him riding triumphant amidst the joyful hosannas of surrounding multitudes, or expiring upon the cross amidst the scoffs of relentless persecutors, he still in every state—in every work—in every trial, exhibits uniformly the same unshaken friendship—the same unspeakable love for sinful man. And who that has eyes to see these Divine mercies displayed in the work of our redemption, will not—must not say, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

And hope too must inspire us with the like sentiments of charity; hope which presents to our view an immortal crown of life and glory. In every state or change of life, hope elevates the soul above the powers of the world, and the fears of death. It administers to the afflicted the balm of comfort; it gives consolation to those who mourn in Zion, and tells the troubled soul that better things remain. While faith assures us that our love like our spirits shall be immortal, hope anticipates the joy. It looks forward to that blissful state where sorrows and strife and enmity shall be at an end; where the wicked shall cease from troubling; where nothing shall hurt or molest those who dwell in God's holy mount; where love shall flow in a pure unsullied stream from its celestial fountain. Charity thus founded on faith and hope, on the merits of Christ and the promises of God, "faileth not." Here we enjoy it as the solace of life, and the foretaste of heaven. Our present comforts of brotherly affection are a faint indeed, but a very pleasing earnest of immortal joys, and incite us to press on to higher degrees of benevolence and love. Our affections being thus drawn up to God, fall like the dew of heaven, and are dispensed like his bounty on all our fellow men, in an earnest desire to make them good and happy.

Charity raises the soul above the vanities of the world, the troubles of life and the fear of death. From Zion's mount, tranquil and at peace she surveys the changing scenes of this busy world, with no emotions but of pity and love. Securely fixed on safety's rock, she beholds, unmoved, the swelling storms of prejudice and passion, *like harmless thunders breaking at her feet.* Charity stands upon faith; on hope she reclines her head; her eyes are raised in smiling confidence to heaven; whilst her hands are diligently employed in deeds of kindness and love to mankind.

Let us then "follow after charity," as the essence and perfection of what is most desirable in life and religion. Let such love as the apostle has here described, be the Christian's constant aim. Let us endeavor to bring ourselves to the measure of this standard; let us cease not in our exertions, till our hearts and lives compare in every dimension: till we can *suffer long*, without murmuring, and *be kind* to those who are unkind to us: till detesting *envy*, we can rejoice in the happiness and prosperity of others: till we can demean ourselves with *meekness and humility* in every state and trial of life: till in all the intercourse of this world our whole deportment shall be so *seemly and decent*, that our good shall not be evil spoken of;—till we can regard the rights of our neighbors as we regard our own; and shall have obtained a perfect control of our passions under all possible provocations; till we are not inclined to *think evil* of other people; till we *rejoice not* in their *wicked conduct*, but *rejoice* always *in the truth*, even though our enemy should be the instrument of promoting it: till we can *bear all things* with patience, covering the faults of others; till we can *believe all things* that God has taught; *hope for all things* that he has promised, and "by patient continuance in well doing," *endure all things* which God in his wise and just providence shall call us to suffer. "He that *thus* endureth to the end shall be saved." When we have run our earthly course—when we have fulfilled God's purpose respecting us in this present world; faith and hope, which have been the sanctified instruments of our salva-

tion, shall be laid aside, as scaffolding no longer useful; the heavenly building, *fitly joined together and edified in love*, shall then appear in glory. Charity shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our heavenly Father;" as a sun which shall never set, and "shall never fail."

And unceasing praises for redeeming mercy, shall, by saints and angels, be rendered unto the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, forever and ever. AMEN.

SERMON IV.

BY THE REV. JOHN LAURIS BLAKE, A. M.
Rector of St. Matthews Church, Boston.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN VIII. 12.

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD; HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

WHAT a cheerless, dismal place would be this earth without the illuminations of material light. Yonder sun has given life and joy, for nearly six thousand years, to the unnumbered worlds scattered through the immensity of space; and to the vast multitudes of creatures which dwell thereon! The light is indeed good! Without it, vegetable nature would lose its beauty, and decay. Without it, animal life, if for any considerable time sustained in being, could scarcely be reckoned of much value. Even in the short season of our night, so needful for rest and repose, a gloom and chill hang over us, like the shadows of the tomb! How inconceivable then would be the effect, if this darkness should be complete and perpetual!

From the incomparable beauty and excellence of light, in the material universe, whatever is highly beautiful or excellent in the moral world, is frequently called light also. Hence

the virtues and graces of the christian character are often represented under the similitude of light; a light, which the disciple of the cross is commanded to diffuse upon those around him, that God, by whose spirit these virtues and graces are produced, may be glorified! Our Saviour said to his followers—"Ye are the light of the world—a city set on an hill, which cannot be hid;" and he admonished them, saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may glorify your Father, who is in heaven." In the same manner of speaking, St. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "Ye are the children of the light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of the darkness." While, on the one hand, whatever is morally good, is called light; so, on the other, whatever is of a contrary character is called darkness. The Ephesians were exhorted to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but to reprove them. And it was afterwards said to them, "For we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The same inspired writer comforted the Colossians, with the assurance that they had been delivered from the power of darkness, and thence translated into the kingdom of him, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; and through whose blood they had redemption, and the forgiveness of sins.

Partly for reasons which have already been named, and partly for others, which will be mentioned, our Saviour is called the light of the world; and, in allusion to the natural sun, he is called the Sun of Righteousness, the brightness of whose beams can dispel the gloomy shades of death, and cause the eternal splendors of Jehovah's throne to shine through the darkness of the tomb. If we look at the moral state of the world, previous to the coming of our Saviour, and even to the present period, where his gospel is not known; and, especially if we contemplate the renovated existence, and the new hopes, of which the Christian is made to partake, in consequence of the divine mission of Jesus Christ on earth, we cannot fail to

acknowledge him to be the light of the world. It is proposed to consider further the appropriateness of this appellation, by bringing into view the analogy between the influence which he imparts to the moral world, and the influence exerted on the natural world, by the material sun.

In the first place, it may be remarked, that without the revelations of divine mercy, through the mission of Jesus Christ, we should be as desolate and dead to every spiritual delight, as would be the whole range of physical nature, to its own productions without the enlivening and invigorating beams of that luminary in the visible heavens! What would have been the condition of sinful and wretched man, had not the Sun of Righteousness, the Day-Spring from on high, imparted to us a knowledge of the means, by which we may be translated from the woes, that, to the eye of reason seem inseparable, from human existence; by which the purposes of heavenly grace will fill the soul with the assurance of a high and most glorious destination! Without Revelation, man might indeed speculate, and dream of an immortality beyond the grave; but, the spectres, fearful and appalling, of an annihilation would continually disquiet the imagination, and paralyze the best affections of the heart. To avoid apprehensions so unwelcome and withering to the most fond desires of the soul, we might fancy mutations in the modes of being, almost without number; but still, to the Christian alone is there a faith and a hope, adequate to our necessities. And, if it could be made certain to us, without revelation, that we are destined to an eternal existence, who could tell the nature of this existence? Who could tell whether the soul is to be purified and cleansed from the defilements of sin, or whether they are to remain forever, continually blackening, till there shall be no difference in depravity and guilt, between fallen men and fallen devils? Who could tell, whether the immortal spirit is to exist imprisoned in a polluted earthly form, or is to be emancipated, and permitted to range, in happy communion, with ethereal beings, throughout the universe of God, passing from

deed that in the present state of the church, it is a part of the enterprize without which all the rest must languish and fail. Brethren, so long as these obvious truths are forgotten, we need not wonder that though the harvest is great the labourers are few. We need not wonder, that demands which are made for the services of our church in every quarter of the land, are made in vain. We neglect the means, and how then can we hope to attain the end? We wait for young men to force their way to the portals of our ministry, when it is our duty to search them out, and guide them with a kind and friendly hand! We suffer many a child of promise in our Sunday Schools, and Bible classes, to be ensnared by temptation, or bound over to secular pursuits, when had we interposed, he might have become a burning and shining light in the sanctuary!

On this subject, however, I would not be mistaken. In recommending provisions for the education of indigent youth, I have in view no profuse and improvident expenditure—no expenditure, which, while it taxes heavily the treasury of the Lord, would hold out an unholy lure to the ministry. It is one of the blessings of our land, that the labours of the clergy meet here but a slender reward, and that they present, therefore, less than in other lands, inducements of a secular nature to those who undertake them. It is a blessing also, though not peculiar to our land, that many can enter this profession, only through the straight gate of toil and self-denial. Indigent in their circumstances; early called to struggle with opposition, and to combat perpetual and ever-varying difficulty; brought into intimate contact with minds of various texture, and habituated to constant excitement and collision, they acquire by such means an energy of purpose, a readiness of resource, and a knowledge of human character, which to the christian minister are invaluable. We deprecate therefore, any provisions which would supersede in their case, the necessity of such exertion. Instead of removing it from the poor, we would if possible impose it on the rich. We would

ing their life in sacrifice to a dumb idol! See them engaged in unholy and polluting rites. See them invoking the bright luminaries of the ethereal expanse! See them worshipping, in stupid mummery, the most loathsome and vile portions of the animal creation! Yes; see them do this, and you will have, pictured before you, what would be exhibited in our land, had the light of the gospel of salvation never shone upon it. The heathen world is now, what, it is to be presumed, we ourselves should be, were it not for the irradiations of divine truth, which shine upon the eye of faith, and lead us to realms on high.

Provided it should, by all, be admitted, that the gospel is thus efficacious in dispelling the uncertainty, the doubt, the darkness, the despair, that prevail in the world, where it gains an influence, it may still be objected, that the language of the text is not literally verified—that Christ is not the light of the world, as that language would indicate, inasmuch, as to a large portion of the world his name is still unknown; to a large portion of it, his messages of salvation have never been sent; upon a large portion of it, the influences of his grace have never descended. And, further, it may be objected, that even in Christian countries, thousands live without coming fully under the dominion of his spiritual kingdom. Such is the melancholy fact. It fills the soul of piety with deep-felt anguish, that so many, under the preaching of the gospel, are hearers of the word, and not doers of it; that so many are characterized by the seed in the parable, which fell by the way side, or on stony ground, or among thorns, and brought no fruit to perfection. We know that multitudes, as it were, yield only a partial submission to the requisitions of Christianity; and others hesitate not lightly to esteem the most endearing promises contained in it, as well as to despise and ridicule its most awful sanctions.

It may be, that those to whom I would, in this place, particularly address myself, will reply, that the light of truth has not, as yet, overshadowed them with such a perfect and irresistible splendor, as has been described; that, they are halting

extending prosperity. We trust that the zeal which inspires it will be caught by other districts of our country, and that the time is not distant, when every diocese will number among its institutions, one devoted to the same objects. And may we add the hope, that these will not be merely local associations, formed without respect to the general wants of the church, and for the narrow purpose of sectional advantage; but that constituted on similar principles, and devoted to one great and common end, they will unite their movements, and operate under the patronage and supervision of the highest council of our church.

We have thus briefly adverted to the causes, or some of the causes, which prevent the increase of our ministry. These causes it is obvious, may all be resolved into the single one we have already named; the want, that is, of the spirit which animated the prophet, or the want, in other words, and to use the language of our day, of the true *Missionary spirit*. By such a spirit, I do not mean the miserable counterfeit which sometimes usurps its name. I do not mean the spirit of emulation, which impels a church to cultivate missions, on the same principle that the magicians of Egypt performed their miracles; merely because their rivals cultivate and profit by them. I do not mean the spirit of proselytism, which sends forth Missionaries to proclaim the dogmas of a sect, rather than to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. I do not mean, in fine, the enthusiasm, which taking its rise in the fervours of imagination, and fostered by the restlessness of the age in which we live, delights in vast and visionary schemes. No! when I name the Missionary spirit, I mean the pure and steady flame, which burned in the bosoms of a Peter, and a Paul; I mean that inextinguishable love of man, which has its rise in nothing but a paramount love for God; I mean that benevolence, which called the Son of God from his throne of glory, and brought him to earth, to bleed and die, and which causes every heart in which it dwells, to melt with compassion over the woes and sins of alienated man. Such we trust is the spirit which begins to pervade and

In reply to the objection, that may be made to our hypothesis, from the limited spread, which the gospel has already had among the nations of the earth, it may be remarked, that the prophecies which relate to the promulgation of Christianity did not contemplate a complete accomplishment, at once, of all that was intended. God, we are not to doubt, in a moment of time, might completely change the moral aspect of the world; might cause every idol, in heathen lands, to crumble into dust; might cause every vestige of unbelief among Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and nominal Christians, to yield submissively to the impressions of revealed faith; might cause every knee to bow, in humble adoration, to the sceptre of the cross; might cause every tongue to unite in devout ascriptions to Jehovah's praise; and without any intervention of human agency, or adventitious means; but this is not the order of his government; this is not the mode of his operation, in the kingdom of grace any more than in the kingdom of nature. He works, in regularly constituted modes; the influences of his Spirit descend, in regularly appointed channels; the determinations of his will, in this glorious change, rise to entire completion, by progressive and orderly gradations. The empire of Immanuel, on earth, is a spiritual and a holy empire; resting, for a basis, on a complete subjection of all the moral and intellectual faculties of our nature. The subjects of this empire are willing, sincere, and obedient. Their allegiance is not the result of external and forced influence; but of an inward and voluntary surrender of the soul. And, on the other hand, the authority extended over this spiritual realm, is exercised in wisdom and parental kindness. The terrors of greatness, and of majesty, are exhibited to view, only when the gentle pursuasions of love are found unavailing. A dominion, composed of such elements, and governed upon such principles, is a spectacle of moral beauty and grandeur, no where else to be found, and which cannot fail to command the admiration of all holy beings.

Such a dominion, my beloved brethren, the Redeemer of man is establishing in the world. To us, it may appear a work

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impracticable ; but, it is in the care of one, whose power is invincible, and who has declared, that not even the gates of hell shall prevail against his designs. The means may be apparently insufficient, but, in his hand, they will be omnipotent. The gospel is to be preached ultimately to every creature ; the heathen will be the trophies of his grace ; the ends of the earth will participate in his salvation. You and I may die before witnessing further progress in the accomplishment of redeeming love ; every herald of the cross now fighting the battles of the Lord of Sabaoth may sink under the weight of his toil, and descend into the grave ; but, others will be raised up to succeed them, even a great army, generation after generation, till the countless banners of pagan and infidel hosts, now raised with insulting mockery towards heaven, and the crescent of the prophet of Arabia, shall be cast at the feet of Him, to whom is to be given the kingdom, and the greatness of the dominion, and the power under the whole heaven.

Let us then, without delay, engage in the service of one whose power is to subdue every opposing obstacle ; whose glory is spreading through the universe ; and whose grace is sufficient for every son and daughter of Adam. Nor should we fail to be co-workers in an enterprize of so much mercy. We cannot indeed follow the Saviour by the exercise of any miraculous power ; but, we can aid by a life of personal virtue and piety ; by a free support of Christian Institutions ; and by a ministration of charity among the children of want. The glory and renown attendant on such deeds will be greater than of the greatest conquerors that ever lived. The splendor and pomp connected with worldly greatness, is mere worthless show—empty as the wind—evanescent as the morning dew. But the glory of virtue and virtuous deeds, is imperishable as the divine nature. The man who builds his hopes on the promises of the gospel, builds upon an everlasting foundation ; " he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

SERMON V.

BY THE REV. FREDERICK BEASLEY, D. D.
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ON KEEPING THE HEART.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE; FOR OUT OF IT ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE.

My Brethren: Almost all mankind, unless in youth their education has been extremely defective, enter upon the career of life with innocent intentions, and under the influence of honorable views. Depraved as is our nature, and prone to evil, there are scarcely any of us, who, in the outset, entertain criminal designs, or do not shrink with horror from the shame and ignominy in which vice involves its perpetrators. All the lessons which we imbibe from the dawn of reason, all the maxims of our own experience, all the force and authority of that example which is set us by the good, and all the sage precepts of moral science and religion, are calculated to imprint upon our minds a preference of virtue and a just abhorrence of vice. How happens it, then, that we so frequently find instances of those, who, in despite of the instructions of wisdom which have been instilled into them from early life, and of those awful examples of infamy and ruin which are presented to their view as the end of the guilty, fall from their first estate of innocence and purity, and become addicted to every species of crime? It is because they are not perpetually upon the watch, as their

moral and religious duty requires of them, against the subtle and insinuating nature of sin. This fatal enemy approaches them unperceived, overtakes and subdues them before they are aware. Now, it is the heart of man against which this enemy directs his first and most insidious attacks;—into this fountain of life he insensibly creeps, and, when once he has gained admission, diffuses through it his fatal poison. To guard this sacred fountain from pollution, therefore, should be the constant object of our vigilance and solicitude. My purpose, at this time, is simply to unfold to you the considerations implied in keeping the heart with all diligence; and under each point of light in which the subject is displayed, you will find, I trust, the motive presented by the wise man, pressed home upon the conscience, 'for out of it are the issues of life.'

Keeping the heart with all diligence, implies, that we should guard it from the intrusion of evil thoughts and purposes—from the rise and progress of criminal passions and desires—from its latent errors and delusions—from a corruption of its moral principles—and finally, from the decay and extinction of its religious sensibilities.

In the first place, keeping the heart with all diligence, implies, that we should guard it from the intrusion of evil thoughts and purposes. In one sense of the word, indeed, our thoughts cannot, in propriety of speech, be said to be subjected to our control. It is not in our power, during our waking hours, to determine whether we will think or not think. In spite of our volitions, thought will pass and repass through our minds in an uninterrupted series. The same law, no doubt, influences the finite orders of spirits above us. If it be not the essence, it is certainly the distinguishing property of the soul to think; and among all finite spirits, their ideas must continue to follow each other in regular and unbroken succession. It is the attribute of the Divine Mind alone, to whose view all things past, present and to come, are always immediately present, to have no change of objects presented to his perceptions, and no fleeting succession of his ideas. It is admitted, therefore, to be utterly be-

yond the power of any thinking being, subordinate to the Creator, to prevent himself from having a continued train of thoughts, during his moments of consciousness. Good and evil thoughts, of consequence, may pass and repass through the minds of angels as well as men, without sullying their celestial purity. At the same time, however, it is worth while to remark, that, although we are prohibited by the constitution of our nature from arresting the course of our own ideas, as much as we are from stopping the circulation of our blood, or any other function of our bodily system which is necessary for the support of life; nevertheless, we are invested with a privilege much more important to our well-being, and moral as well as intellectual improvement, the power of determining upon what objects of contemplation we will fix the attention of the mind and exhaust the sensibilities of the heart. Here, then, we perceive, is liberty allowed to mankind, and at this point should commence that constant vigilance over himself which the good man should exert in his own defence and security. Evil thoughts are enemies, against whose approaches and invasions he should sedulously guard the heart, the great citadel of moral and spiritual life. If once surrendered to these invaders, it will be gradually seduced from its allegiance to God and its devotion to duty. If it be not in our power to prevent the sudden and occasional intrusions of evil thoughts, we are not compelled by any necessity to allow them to dwell in that sacred retreat, or to foster and cherish them to our own contamination and final ruin. In this way only do we become criminal. And, my brethren, allow me to appeal to your own good sense and experience: Is there any mind, however pure and innocent, which would not be sullied by allowing its imagination habitually to float amidst schemes of fraud and villany, amidst impure images and the scenes of licentious pleasure? Would not the soul contract defilement, by coming frequently in contact with such polluting objects of contemplation? Out of the heart, we may be assured, are the issues of life. 'A good man,' says our Divine Master, 'out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth

that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Again, says the same heavenly Instructer, 'out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.' The noblest virtues which adorn our species, as well as the darkest crimes which disgrace it, have their origin in this private recess. Is it not here that fraud and circumvention concert their nefarious plans, that dissimulation and hypocrisy conceal amidst shades of night their guilty views, that seduction conceives its mischievous purposes, that voluptuousness riots in unlawful pleasure, and that resentment and revenge whet their weapons of death? Sin must first be conceived in the heart, before it is brought forth into action upon the stage of life.

Now, what are those thoughts, against which we are required by our moral and religious duty, to be so sedulously upon the watch! They may be comprised under these divisions. Those ideas which lead to a disbelief of the existence of God and to misconceptions of his attributes—false views of his divine government, which give rise to distrust and murmurings, complaints and discontents, and, sometimes, even to revilings and blasphemies—incredulous conceptions about the character and offices of Christ, and of the pretensions of holy scripture to truth and divine authority—considerations which tend to weaken and impair our sense of obligation to duty, and to obliterate the impression of those laws of rectitude which God himself hath inscribed upon our nature—vain and fallacious imaginations in reference to the efficacy of prayer, and all the sacred offices and ordinances of religion; and, finally, the dark purposes of dishonesty, fraud, adultery, illicit pleasure, revenge and murder. Is it not evident, that frequent indulgence in ideas of this kind, must tend to soil the purity of our spirits, and to vitiate and harden the moral feelings? There are scarcely any of us, who do not, at first, look upon sin, under all its forms,

with displacency and abhorrence. The timid and scrupulous conscience of the truly virtuous, not only recoils with horror from more flagrant crimes, but has an instinctive repugnance to the slightest violations of rectitude, and to irregularities, indecencies or improprieties of behaviour. And yet such is the radical imperfection of our nature, and its extreme tendency to evil, that there is scarcely any one, however innocent may be his intentions at the commencement of his course, who may not so train his own thoughts, and discipline his mind in the school of vice, as to become capable of any enormity. In most persons, such apt pupils are we in this school, the transition from the evil imagination to the criminal purpose, and from the criminal purpose to the flagitious deed, is precipitate and fatal. When the guilty project first enters the mind, it is viewed with horror. Reason condemns it, conscience mutters her awful voice, and lifts her avenging scourge against it; while the path along which it leads is seen to terminate in a gulf of shame, misery, and ruin. At each moment, however, in which the sinner's mind broods over it, his inward horror of the act is abated; passion assumes the place of reason, and dims and obscures its sacred lights; the voice of conscience is drowned in the tumult; the sinner waxes bolder and bolder, until a fatal fatuity seizes him, he becomes entangled in the toils of Satan, and rushes blindfold to the perpetration of acts of the most desperate wickedness. By a process like this, most men advance from one stage of wickedness to another. No one leaps suddenly to the commission of very enormous vices. Men proceed, from step to step, in iniquity, subjected to perpetual checks from reason, conscience and a sense of shame, until, at length, disenthralling themselves from all restraints both of God and man, those enormous vices are engendered and nurtured in the heart, which become as red as crimson; and might "the multitudinous sea incarnadine." By what but a baleful process like this, suppose ye, could Cain have wrought his mind to such a pitch of phrensy as to imbrue his hands in his brother's blood? What but this, could have driven Absalom to treachery and rebellion

against his father; could have stimulated Herodias to the murder of John the Baptist, Hazael to the massacre of the Jews, or Judas to betray his Lord? Ah! my dear brethren, we know not the jeopardy into which we throw our happiness and peace, when we give evil thoughts admission to our hearts. They can never be indulged by us without imminent hazard, and may become the germs out of which spring those vices which sink us into shame, contempt and misery. Let us sedulously expel them, as the disturbers of our tranquillity, the seducers of our innocence, the taint of our moral purity, and the mildew falling upon our immortal hopes.

In the next place, the diligent keeping of the heart implies that we should preserve it from the rise and progress of criminal passions and desires.

So wisely is the whole system of human nature contrived by the Creator, that none of the principles, propensities, affections or passions can properly be said to be evil, in their original designation. Of the whole man, as constituted both of body and soul, when he rose a finished piece of workmanship under the hands of his supreme contriver, it might have been affirmed, as justly as of the frame of physical nature, 'God saw that it was good.' Evil, therefore, does not arise from the original construction of our nature, but from the excess, or defect, in our application of those powers and principles which are communicated to us. Hunger, thirst and our other corporeal appetites, are indispensable to the continuation of our present existence. And what would human life be without those affections and passions which, by their gentle agitations, preserve its waters from stagnation and putridity—as love, benevolence, humanity, sympathy, ambition to excel, desire of improving our condition, and all our social inclinations? And even those passions which are usually denominated malignant, tending to the injury of ourselves and others, as anger, wrath, resentment, indignation, as primarily incorporated into the texture of our mind, were not bestowed for purposes of annoyance and violence, but for purposes of defence, and as guards to protect us from wrong, in-

justice, oppression and cruelty. So admirably, therefore, is our entire frame organized, that when all our powers are made to act in concert and harmony, and the lower held in due subordination to the higher, and all of them controlled and regulated by the influences of the Divine Spirit, our peace, comfort and rational enjoyment are the ultimate result. The sinfulness of our nature consists in the powerful tendency of those principles which may lead to evil, to stimulate us to excess, and by this means destroy that equipoise of the mind, in which true virtue and happiness are found. We are not contented with the moderate gratification of hunger and thirst, for example, but are prone to fall into the excesses of gluttony, revelling and intoxication. A rational ambition to excel, does not satisfy our desires, even when we have attained objects adequate to our happiness; but our wishes grow by the aliment which feeds them. Thus an inordinate thirst of dominion, wealth, honor, and pre-eminence, springs up in the breasts of men, which occasions them to stickle at no expedients, however nefarious, to compass their ends; to seek their own gratification with an avidity that nothing can sate, and when supported by a power commensurate with their wishes, to spread conflagration through the world, and extinguish its embers in blood. It is the same with the other passions, which have so violent an impetus towards excess. In the pursuit of riches, when the desires are moderated and restrained, men are excited to honorable exertion to maintain themselves and families, and preserved from the baneful effects of indolence. But, in this case, also, avarice is apt to be engendered, and when this vice has taken possession of the soul, it expels the noblest virtues, and produces its debasing progeny, parsimony, niggardliness, insensibility, dishonesty, cozenage, fraud, a contempt of morals, an indifference to religion, and a love of money, which supplants in the bosom the love of God himself. 'Be ye angry, and sin not,' says the Apostle. Anger, resentment, indignation against vice, are virtuous principles and efforts of magnanimity, on some occasions, and when properly regulated and subdued. But when allow-

ed to degenerate into excess, what storms do they excite in the breast; what miseries do they inflict, both upon those who are subjected to their influence, and upon others against whom they direct their fury? The same may be said of envy and jealousy, which are abuses of the generous principle of emulation. They at once disquiet and torment the bosom of him who gives place to them, and produce the most mischievous effects upon society. Now, all these principles of our common nature, have their origin, grow to maturity and shoot forth into such wild excesses, in the heart. Should we not guard, with unceasing solicitude, that sacred seat from which they spring? In every instance, in which these criminal passions are indulged, the heart is vitiated in the process. To preserve its purity and singleness, we must observe their earliest tendencies to evil, and nip them in the bud.

And, my brethren, as a consideration which should rouse us to the most strenuous endeavors to the performance of our duty in this respect, is it not evident, as asserted by the inspired penman, that out of the heart, thus swayed by the benevolent affections, or actuated by lawless passions, are the issues of life? When love, sympathy, tenderness and brotherly kindness reign within us, what peace, comfort, contentment and joy do they transfuse through the mind, and communicate to all who come within the sphere of our social intercourse? On the contrary, when criminal passsions seize upon the soul, with what direful fury do they agitate and torment it? What desolation and ruin do they produce upon mankind! Gluttony and intemperance first sink their votaries into the deepest debasement, and then dig for them an untimely grave. To what bitter altercations, implacable feuds and inextinguishable heart-burnings, does avarice give rise? And are not envy, jealousy, inordinate ambition, illicit love, resentment and revenge, the principal actors in all those scenes of guilt, which history has recorded with horror, and which have furnished matter for the deepest tragedies? If the darkest crimes have their origin in evil thoughts, the passions are the baneful agents in their perpetration.

In the next place, the diligent keeping of the heart implies, that we should detect and expose to itself its latent errors and delusions. To obtain an accurate knowledge of ourselves, and our real character, has always been allowed, by the wisest men, to be a most difficult acquisition. Self-love is a great, and, sometimes, fatal deceiver. Hence it is that sin finds us so vulnerable, and so easily vanquished under his insidious attacks. Self-love causes us to view the virtues and vices through a discolored medium, and thus either confounds them together, or does not nicely discriminate the shades that separate them. Viewed through this medium, vices are stripped of their deformity, or made to assume the guise and lineaments of virtue. Pride, arrogance and superciliousness, are thus converted into a becoming self-respect and dignity of manners; prodigality and wasteful profusion, into generosity and liberality of spirit; parsimony and rank avarice, into a prudent economy; dissimulation, deceit and a dark hypocrisy, into politeness and urbanity of deportment, uncommon penetration, and a knowledge of the world. Under the influence of this self-delusion, the unprincipled defrauder, or extortioner, who avails himself of every opportunity to overreach a neighbor, or exact of him an unjust demand, alleviates the offence to his conscience, by alleging that he is only conforming to the customs of the world: while the foul-mouthed blasphemer, and obscene jester, who soil at every word the spotless majesty of heaven, and wound the ear of modesty with impure allusions, are willing to believe that their feelings remain untainted, and they have a good heart; as if a polluted stream could ever issue from a pure fountain. The man who has thrown off the fear of God, and all religious impressions, gratulates himself that he is no dissembler or hypocrite. The mere form a list in religion, who utters the language of devotion, while his heart is untouched with its sacred fires, that he is no fanatic, and makes no professions in which he is not sincere: while the wild enthusiast, by his sudden ecstacies and occasional raptures of devotion, expects to make amends to Heaven for his want of the steady habits of a virtuous and

pious life ; that kind of life, which, like a ' shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' In short, the most atrocious vices, are not without their pretexts and extenuations also. Slander and defamation are only an innocent play upon the foibles and imperfections of others, while the basest seductions of innocence, and dissoluteness of morals, are pardonable failings, or excesses not to be scanned with too severe an eye. Nay, to such an extremity do mankind proceed in palliating to their consciences the most glaring violations of the pure and holy law of God, that even the unnatural suicide and wilful murderer are not left without excuse. The one, when he does violence to nature, and tramples upon that law which nature's God has written in his bosom, does injury to no one, and only exercises an undoubted right. The other, when he enlists in those fashionable butcheries, denominated duels, in which human victims are immolated according to established rites, to the sanguinary demon of revenge, the Moloch of modern times, he is only acting upon the point of honor, and seeking a reparation of injuries, or satisfaction for an affront. O sinners ! and is God a man, that he should be deceived by false pretences, or the son of man, that he should repent, and allow his law to be disannulled by the vague interpretations and deceptive glosses of your passions ? Hath he said, that at the day of final account, the secrets of your hearts shall be disclosed, and every covering of sin removed, and shall he not execute his words, and bring you to a fearful retribution ?

Nor, my brethren, do the self-delusions of mankind cease with the detail of their moral duties. In the affairs of their salvation, they are equally numerous, and equally fatal to their everlasting peace. Could we throw off the veil with which they conceal their iniquities from their own view, the whole purpose of our ministry would be accomplished ; they would abhor themselves, like holy Job, and repent in dust and ashes. Are there none among you who are present, who are conscious that your peace is not made with God ; that you have no effectual interests in a Saviour's merits, and that your happiness

through eternity is not secured? And could you remain in a state of rest and tranquillity, while thus circumstanced, were you not deceived by some fatal misconception of your real situation? In order that you should leave at hazard such infinitely important concerns, must you not impose upon your understandings by fallacious views of your duty and interest, and deceive your hearts by visionary hopes? There is not one of us, who does not believe that he shall be happy at his departure from the present life. The idea of being consigned, at death, to future wretchedness, when feelingly brought home to our bosoms, would be insupportable to us all. And yet, let us put the inquiry; upon what ground do you rest this hope of future happiness, to which the hearts of all mankind so fondly cling? Have you complied with the conditions which are represented in Scripture, as indispensable to your salvation? A few only can give place to an humble trust that they have done so, while a large proportion of you would not presume to lay claim to any such pretensions. Upon what then do you rest your hopes of acceptance with God; or your present peace and tranquillity, while in a state of insubmission to his law? Perhaps upon some vague ideas of the divine benevolence and mercy, which will not be so strict as some suppose, in scrutinizing your motives and conduct, and punishing your iniquities; upon the general uprightness and integrity of your conduct, although it be not exactly conformed to the precepts of the gospel; upon your resolutions of future amendment and entire obedience; perhaps upon the principles of unbelief, rejecting the claims of your Saviour, and the evidence of revelation, and seeking relief from your apprehensions about futurity in the gloomy prospect of an utter extinction of being. These, and others, similar to these, are the secret errors and illusions which superinduce upon mankind either a portentous indifference and apathy, or a profound and deadly sleep in the matter of their salvation. O fatal errors! O deluded Christians! And can nothing arouse you from this death-like slumber? Can neither the dictates of right reason, nor the monitions of conscience,

nor the sacred movements of the Holy Spirit, nor the evidence and power of divine truth, nor the warnings which come to you from the beds of languishment and death, nor the awful thunders of the gospel, awake you to a sense of duty, and quicken your exertions to work out your salvation?

My brethren, let us awake from our fatal security in sin, and expel from our hearts all those fallacious dreams, which are deluding us to our present and final ruin. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light! The Christian who has imbibed the genuine spirit of devotion, instead of endeavoring to extenuate or justify his transgressions, views them in their native deformity, and in their whole contrariety to the law of God. The familiar language of his soul, in its intercourse with Heaven, is that of the pious Psalmist—'Try me, O God! and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts! Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' He is deeply sensible of that profound abyss of guilt and misery which is presented to him in his own nature, and which nothing but the searchings of the Divine Spirit of grace can penetrate and purify. He is humbled to the dust, under a conviction of his unworthiness, in the presence of God and at the footstool of his Saviour. He reposes all his trust and confidence in God, knowing that he careth for him, and that his compassions fail not. Let us, then, my brethren, in obedience to the admonitions of the Divine Spirit, keep incessant watch over our own hearts, excluding from them all evil thoughts, detecting and rectifying all fatal errors and misconceptions of duty, regulating and subduing our inordinate passions and desires, and subjecting our whole man to the peaceful sway of the blessed Spirit of grace. Let us not only abstain from all presumptuous sins, but endeavor to cleanse our consciences from our secret faults. Let us bear deeply impressed upon our minds the important consideration that on the great day of account God shall bring to light 'every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'

SERMON VI.

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SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE; FOR OUT OF IT ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE.

My Brethren: in discoursing upon this subject, I undertook, upon a former occasion, simply to determine what is implied in the diligent keeping of the heart. I have said that it implies, we should guard it from the intrusion of evil thoughts and purposes; from the rise and progress of criminal passions and desires; from its latent errors and delusions; from a corruption of its moral principles, and, finally, from the decay and extinction of its religious sensibilities. I have already descanted upon the three first considerations.

In the next place, the diligent keeping of the heart implies that we should preserve the purity of its moral principles. When a man's principles of morals have become completely vitiated and corrupted, his condition is desperate and deplorable in the extreme. He has now lost irretrievably the esteem and confidence of others, and can engage in no useful occupation. If he be possessed of wealth, he spends his time in solitary splendor, the object of scorn and disgust to all, and tormented by an evil conscience; if poor, he seeks his support by dishonest shifts and contrivances, or by criminal depredations upon the

property of others. In either case, his life is forever imbittered by the consciousness of shame and disgrace. Now this utter debasement and wretchedness of mankind is not the product of a moment, but the slow result of steady causes operating upon the mind. The heart has been thus radically corrupted, by the indulgence of evil thoughts, by giving way to the impulse of disorderly passions, and by extenuating to itself the guilt of individual acts of immorality. By a gradual process of this nature, our moral characters are blasted, and our principles of probity sapped. Should we not, then, watch with unwearied diligence and the most searching scrutiny the heart, by whose agency these fatal changes are effected? In this respect, too, may it be justly and emphatically pronounced, that out of it are the issues of life. Without the prevalence of good principles, that mutual confidence among men, which is the very bond of social order, would be unloosed, and the whole machinery of society must stop its action;—every member of the community, therefore, however humble or elevated his station, should consider himself bound by the most forcible obligations to pay a scrupulous attention to the rules of probity and honor. The instructions of the wise man, upon this point, are beautifully conveyed in the maxims which immediately succeed our text—'Let thine eye,' says he, 'look right on, and thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the paths of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil.'

To preserve firm and steady principles of duty, and an incorruptible integrity, amidst the temptations of the world, the vicissitudes of life, and all the revolutions of fortune to which we are exposed, is one of the most delicate and arduous parts of virtue; it requires a constancy of mind and stability of character, which are properties only of a few. How large a portion of our fellow men, after having been carefully nurtured in the doctrines and precepts of the faith, let go their integrity upon the first shock of temptation! They exhibit new features of character, accordingly as they are called forth by times and

circumstances, and are ever ready to accommodate their principles and conduct to what appear to be the pressing interests and exigencies of the moment. It has become quite an apothegm in colloquial intercourse, although it implies a pungent sarcasm upon our race, and is a lamentable truth, as it regards its moral import, that the characters of men become changed by a change of circumstances. How few are there, so impenetrably cased in their integrity, and so firmly purposed to do their duty to the utmost, that neither trials nor temptations, neither prosperities nor adversities, neither poverty nor riches, neither dignities and honors, nor shame, reproach and contumely, neither caresses nor persecutions, neither life nor death, can induce them to swerve from the dictates of reason and conscience, or depart from the path of perfect rectitude? And yet, my brethren, should we anticipate that the most rigid adherence to morals, and scrupulous attention to the minutest points of duty, would be wanting in a society professing to be Christian, and imbibing from their cradle the pure milk of the revealed word of God? In no matters are the precepts of the Gospel more clear, precise and imperative, and its awful sanctions, as motives to obedience, more cogently urged upon the understanding and the feelings, than in those of our moral duties. While it exacts of its possessors, under its highest penalties, universal holiness of life and conversation, it penetrates and searches, by its wholesome influence, the springs of action in the heart. Requiring the utmost purity of intention and scrupulosity of conscience, it first restrains from injury and wrong, and then generates in the bosom every generous purpose, every refined and noble sentiment, and prompts to the display of every manly virtue. Are you a Christian? Then you should be just, humane, tender-hearted, chaste, disinterested, gentle, humble, temperate in all things, active in doing good, prudent, discreet, self-denying, and heavenly-minded. All that the philosophers have taught in their schools, or exhibited in the character of their imaginary just man, Christ has imposed upon his followers, while, at the same time, he has wrought up their virtue to

still higher perfection, by referring them to the will of God as their rule of duty, to the purification of their hearts as the means of holiness, and to a tender love of mankind together with the prospect of everlasting happiness as its motives. The whole tendency of our religion, when its genuine and not feigned influences are felt, and, at the same time, one of its most happy and sublime effects, is to create in the mind a delicate and tender conscience, and an acute religious sensibility, which occasion us to recoil with repugnance and disgust, from any act which is incompatible with that holy law which is a lamp to our feet, which would cast an imputation upon our Christian character, offend our God, or bring into disrepute and disparagement the faith which we espouse. The Christian, upon whose heart and affections our religion has wrought its perfect work, may boldly be pronounced a real model of that imaginary just man, whom the ancient writers delighted to portray; a model, however, finished with finer touches of humanity, adorned with more gentle and attractive graces, and into which the Divine Artist has breathed the spirit and temperament of Heaven.

Vain, therefore, my brethren, are the loudest professions which we may make to piety, the austerity of our manners, apparent sanctity of our demeanor, and all the outward symptoms of penitence and devotion, if we 'bring not forth fruits meet for repentance;' and don ot discover, in our intercourse with men, unsullied purity of conscience and the most scrupulous integrity. The sincerity of our faith, according to the view of our Divine Master, must be proved by our works. Shall he dare lay claim to the honors and rewards of a Christian who fails in keeping the commandments of God, or who, under any circumstances, can be tempted to a dishonest ordishonorable act, in order to raise a fortune for himself, to save from ruin that which is tottering, or for any other imaginary purpose? As soon may Christ be made to accord with Belial, or the service of God with that of the unrighteous mammon. Our religion indignantly repudiates the pretensions of such apostate disciples. Her language is 'whatsoever things are honest,

whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things.'

Finally, it is essential to the diligent keeping of the heart, that we preserve, in wholesome and lively exercise, our religious affections. The fear of God is not only the beginning of knowledge, as is asserted by the wise man, but it is also the only stable foundation of virtue. Religion and morality are twin-sisters in the heart of man, and are born, live and die together. Was there ever any one, who, as soon as he found himself beginning to become a sceptic in the doctrines of Christianity, did not also perceive that his sense of moral obligation was declining? If some enemies of the faith, from a happiness of natural constitution, or from a strong regard to their reputation in the world, have been withheld from scandalous vices, and even displayed amiable qualities and undoubted probity, not an instance can be given of one who has discovered, both in his doctrine and example, a delicate and scrupulous attention to the whole circle of his moral duties. The fact is, that hostility to those restraints which are imposed upon the passions by the christian religion, is the most productive cause of a disbelief of its doctrines; young persons, more especially, if they will be attentive to the secret operations of their own minds, will perceive that the irregularities of their conduct were coeval with the decline of religious sensibility. When they cease to be strictly pure and exemplary in their manners, they cease to believe; and when they cease to believe, their hearts are corrupted, and they become vicious. How inestimable, then, is the operation of religious principle upon the minds of men, and especially upon the affections and passions of the young! It is like a refiner's fire and fuller's soap, cleansing, invigorating and purifying the whole system of human nature. When all its divine influences are shed abroad in that corrupt and turbid fountain, the heart of man, they are like the tree which Moses cast into the waters of Marah, or like the angel which descended into the pool of Bethesda, and commu-

nicated to that stream its healing efficacy. Never, therefore, my brethren, let the fallacious idea get possession of your minds, that you can practise a perfect morality, and so comport yourselves as to be acceptable to God, without the aid of religious belief or of devotional feelings: this is a maxim of the passions, or of a misguided reason, and is not true. Religious feeling, and an efficacious sense of moral duty, are so intimately blended and kneaded together in our constitution by the Creator, that the one cannot subsist in full vigor, and perform its appointed office, without the aid and co-operation of the other. The character of the greatest and most estimable man that ever lived, would be imperfect, if it wanted the finishing touches of piety towards God, which communicate to it its highest ornaments and most attractive graces. What but the influence of that Divine Spirit which is obtained by faith, penitence and prayer, can renew our depraved nature, control our unruly wills and affections, and lead us steadily and surely in the way of uprightness? When, like the prodigal son, smitten with a sense of our sin and misery, we have appealed to our Heavenly Father for forgiveness, and unburthened our sacred sorrows at the foot of the cross,—we feel ourselves constrained to duty by more tender motives, and a new train of ideas and affections take possession of the soul, and nobler and more elevated prospects are opened to our view. My brethren, the inward feelings and outward exercises of devotion, are indispensably necessary to sustain the feebleness of our nature, quell the turbulence of the passions, cleanse the mind from the impurities of sensual desire, and keep alive within us that holy zeal which alone can render the yoke of the divine law easy and its burthen light. Who does not feel, after the exercises of sacred meditation, of public and private prayer, of an attendance at the holy table, and all the various offices of devotion, that his repugnance to sin is augmented, his love of holiness revived, his resolutions of duty strengthened, the force of temptation abated, his passions and desires purified and refined, and a sacred tranquillity and joy pervading his mind? If you wish, therefore, to preserve your-

selves from the several vices and all their dreadful consequences, to cultivate and bring to perfection within yourselves the moral virtues and graces, and, in a word, to attain to that perfection in holiness which shall assimilate you to God, and fit you for the enjoyment of the bliss of heaven, keep your pious feelings, by every practicable expedient, in a state of lively and vigorous excitement.

And now, my brethren, having attempted to explain to you what is implied in the vigilant keeping of the heart, and the incalculable importance of attending to this injunction of the wise man, allow me to inquire, in drawing the subject to a conclusion, Are you conscious that you have devoted such a degree of attention and anxiety to this matter, as are exacted of you by a regard to your own interest and the word of God? Although you may have been restrained by numberless considerations, from the commission of presumptuous sins, yet, are you assured that you have been cleansed from all secret faults, which sully you in the sight of God? Have you sedulously expelled from your minds all evil thoughts, restrained and regulated your unruly passions, detected and rectified those errors and delusions which might blind your understandings and lead you into guilt; contracted settled principles of virtue, and nurtured by every means within your power your devotional sentiments? In short, do you sincerely believe that your hearts are, at this moment, right in the sight of God, and should their whole state be unveiled to his searching eye, you would meet with his pardon and grace? If you are unable to answer these interrogatories to your own satisfaction, let me entreat you to enter promptly upon the task of preparing yourselves to do so. Do you ask me by what means you shall be able to comply with the duty of preserving your hearts from all impurity? The reply is easy and satisfactory: Never allow yourselves to think any evil—pay a strict attention to all the scruples and monitions of conscience, avoid the first approaches of sin, and the sudden impulses of the passions, hold frequent communion with your own spirits, and subject yourselves to the test of frequent

self-examinations. Nor is this all. If you would have a conscience void of offence both towards God and man, avoid all communication with unworthy and licentious companions, and seek intercourse only with the good; abstain from the perusal of indecent and immoral works, and devote your leisure hours to the reading of the sacred scriptures, and of all those authors who will at once enlighten your understandings, improve your moral feelings, and warm your hearts with the sentiments of piety and virtue; and, finally, practise all the duties of a holy life.

And, my brethren, need I urge upon you any other motives than those which must have been suggested to your own minds, during the elucidation of this topic, to induce you to exert incessant vigilance over your hearts? If the ancient sages, in quest of what they estimated the supreme good in this world, subjected their affections and passions to such a rigid discipline, submitted to so many privations, and encountered all evils with fortitude and magnanimity, shall we regard it as an effort above the flight of Christian virtue to subject ourselves to similar restraints, and exhibit the same self-control, to attain that exalted reward which awaits us in a future life? They were in pursuit of an earthly recompense; we aim at one which is heavenly. 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' says our Divine Master, 'for they shall see God.' Sincerity and singleness of heart will form our best recommendation at the bar of heaven. If upon the great day of final account the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and upon that disclosure will be founded the sentence which shall determine their everlasting destiny, surely we shall not escape the tremendous doom of the guilty, and cannot expect to ascend to the realms of celestial purity and bliss, unless we have previously undergone that complete purification of the spirit which shall fit us for the enjoyment which is found within them.

SERMON VII.

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THE ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER.

JOB XXI. 15.

WHAT IS THE ALMIGHTY, THAT WE SHOULD SERVE HIM? AND WHAT PROFIT SHOULD WE HAVE, IF WE PRAY UNTO HIM?

These words, my brethren, are put into the mouth of a wicked and irreligious person by the Arabian patriarch, in one of the conferences which he held with his friends, when suffering under the pressure of severe affliction. The ungodly man is represented as asking, in a scoffing tone, '*What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?*' It is not, indeed, very surprising, that they who are wholly immersed in worldly concerns, should indulge the impious imagination implied in this interrogatory form of speech; but the advantages of prayer to those who look beyond the present transitory scene, will appear to be inestimable. Let us then consider some of these advantages, that we may be more incited to the practice of a duty, the due performance of which is one of the highest privileges of an intelligent and accountable being.

Man is a weak and dependent creature. He was brought into the world by the will of his great and beneficent Creator. He draws not a breath but by the permission of the God who made him. He can neither 'will nor do,' independent of 'his

good pleasure.' It is therefore, of unspeakable importance to acquire the favor of this Almighty Being. Now prayer is represented in the holy scriptures as one of the principal conditions, on which we may hope to secure this invaluable benefit; which, indeed, may be said to include all others; for 'in his favor is life,' and 'his loving kindness is better than life.' I will not multiply quotations from the inspired penmen, as passages to this effect will readily suggest themselves to those who are at all conversant with the sacred writings. One or two only will be repeated. 'Ask,' says our Saviour, 'and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be open, unto you.' 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' Prayer, then, is the medium, by which we are taught to expect those things, which are necessary to our well-being, both in time and eternity. In proportion, therefore, as it is desirable that we should possess them, it must be a beneficial exercise to approach the Almighty in acts of supplication for his mercies, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. When, indeed, we duly consider the importance of our relation to the Supreme Being, as the author of our present enjoyments, and the foundation of our future hopes; when we reflect, that, as rational and immortal beings, this relation can never be dissolved, and that prayer is the appointed method by which we hold communion with the Deity, we cannot, as I have already remarked, but esteem the privilege of addressing this great and glorious Being, as one of the most distinguished which we can possibly enjoy. 'Is any one afflicted?' says St. James, 'let him pray,' and the oil of divine consolation may be poured into his wounded bosom. Does his heart bleed with anguish, and are his eyes suffused with tears, on the death of one, who was near and dear to him? Has he consigned to the tomb an amiable child, in whose life his own, like that of the patriarch, was 'bound up,' or a venerated father, on whose counsels he leaned, and by whose paternal consolations his sorrows were soothed, and his burdens alleviated;

or a tender mother, who instilled the earliest lessons of moral and religious truth into his opening and susceptible mind, whose untiring assiduities were never wanting to him, when languishing on the couch of pain and sickness, and to whom he was only doubly dear, when oppressed with calamity, or deserted by the world? Does he lament a departed sister, whose pure and disinterested affection no misconduct could alienate, and no circumstance change; or a brother who shared his youthful sports, and was the familiar companion of his maturer years? Has he committed to the dust, the remains of the beloved partner of his life, who heightened all his joys, and participated, with endearing sympathy, in all his griefs and troubles; or followed to his 'long home' a kind and faithful friend,to whom his most private thoughts were freely imparted, and whose cheerful and instructive conversation often refreshed and enlivened his sinking spirits, when spent with toil, or saddened by disappointment? When mourning under such melancholy bereavements, let him pour out his sorrows at the footstool of his heavenly Father, 'who does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men,' and he may rise from his devotions with a less burdened heart. Hope may revisit his soul, and suggest the delightful prospect of a happy re-union with his departed friends and relatives, in a more perfect and enduring state of existence. Have we experienced unkindness or treachery from one whom we supposed to be our friend? Our injured feelings may be soothed, by addressing in prayer that gracious and unchangeable Being, who 'will never leave nor forsake' those who put their trust in Him. Has poverty 'like an armed man' approached the habitation which was once the abode of wealth or competence? Its disconsolate inmates may experience an alleviation of their distress, by looking up to the God and Father of that Saviour, who, when on earth, 'had not where to lay his head.' It may be suggested to their minds, that their earthly treasures are taken from them, only to render them more sensible of the value of those durable riches, which are laid up in heaven for the righteous. Are we in circumstances of

doubt and perplexity? How great is the happiness of being able to repair to the throne of Him, who 'ordereth the steps of a virtuous man,' that we may receive direction and assistance from that God, by whom 'the very hairs of our head are all numbered,' and who overlooks not 'the fall of a sparrow;' who can throw a beam of celestial light on the path it may be most expedient for us to tread, and which may finally conduct us to peace and safety. Are we separated for a time, by unavoidable circumstances, from the objects of our affection? Are any of them wafted on the vast and treacherous ocean: or do waters roll and mountains rise, between those who are connected by the endearing ties of consanguinity and friendship? How great, my brethren, is the privilege of offering our mutual prayers to that omniscient Parent, whose eye surveys, at a single glance, his intelligent offspring, 'in all places of his dominion,' that he would bless and protect our absent friends and relatives; that he would preserve them, to borrow the comprehensive language of our liturgy, 'from the dangers of the sea, from sickness, from the violence of enemies, and from every evil to which they may be exposed.' When, after the cares and labors of the day, we retire to our pillow, with what satisfaction may we not commit ourselves, in the defenceless hours of repose, to His gracious protection, who 'never slumbers nor sleeps:' who can guard us from the sudden tempest, or the fearful conflagration; who can shake the purpose of the midnight robber, or unnerve the arm of the lurking assassin. When, also, refreshed by the kindly influence of sleep, we awake with a vigor renewed like that of the eagle, and the morning light again salutes our dwellings, with what grateful feelings do not our thoughts ascend in prayer to Him, who causes the approach of his sun to dispel the shades of darkness!

> 'New born, we bless the waking hour,
> Once more, with awe, rejoice to be;
> Our conscious souls resume their power,
> And spring, our guardian God, to thee.'

With what fervor are we not prepared to supplicate his mercy and guidance through the ensuing day! With what earnest-

ness are we not disposed to pray, that he would defend us from 'every kind of danger,' that he would 'keep our tongues from evil, and our lips that they speak no guile;' or, if our minds should unhappily be disquieted by anger or passion, amidst the busy scenes before us, that, at least, the sun may not be permitted to 'go down upon our wrath.'

But prayer, in its most extensive sense, includes not merely petitions for divine mercies, but thanksgiving for favors received, confession of sins committed, and ascriptions of praise to the great Author of the universe. In all these acts of the soul, how great is our inward enjoyment and complacency, when they are rightly performed. When we receive a kindness from our earthly friends, how is the heart dilated with gratitude, and with what pleasure do we indulge the generous sentiment. How then must our bosoms be expanded with grateful emotions, when we acknowledge the important and innumerable benefits we have received from our Father in heaven, 'the author of every good and perfect gift,' and, indeed, the ultimate cause of even those blessings which are bestowed upon us through the instrumentality of our fellow men. 'How dear are thy counsels unto us, O God! O how great is the sum of them. If we tell them, they are more in number than the sand.' Who brought us into the scene of our earthly existence? Who preserved our helpless infancy? Who inspired the parental bosom with instinctive fondness? Who guided our froward and impetuous youth? Who hath directed the energies of our riper years, and been the support of our declining age? Who hath enabled us to elude 'the snare of the fowler,' and escape 'the noisome pestilence?' Who hath dissipated the terrors which assailed us by night, and shielded us from 'the arrow that flieth by day?' Who hath taught the eye of faith, looking unto Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, to pierce the gloomy recesses of the grave, and opened the bright prospect of eternal happiness, beyond 'the dark valley of the shadow of death?' And is there no profit, my brethren, in thanking the great Author of these manifold blessings, and glorious hopes; no holy transport and

elevation of mind? Is not the sense of these benefits enhanced by viewing them as the gifts of God? Ask the holy men of old, the sages and the prophets of Jewish antiquity, who delighted to attune their harps to songs of thanksgiving. The lyre of David never emitted a sweeter strain, than when touched by the hand of religious gratitude. When, on the other hand, the heart is pierced with a sense of its aberrations from Him, who has a legitimate claim to its highest affections; when the conscience is polluted with guilt; when 'we have gone astray from the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls,' and, convinced at last, like the repentant prodigal, of our great and numberless offences against the Divine Majesty, are sincerely desirous of returning to our Heavenly Father, how unspeakable is the consolation of confessing our iniquities, and saying, with unfeigned humility, 'Father, we have sinned against heaven and in thy sight.' How great the relief to our broken hearts and contrite spirits, when, prostrated before the High and Holy One, who is gracious and long-suffering, with a full purpose of future amendment, through the assistance of his blessed Spirit, we plead the blood of the everlasting covenant, that 'cleanseth from all sin.' With what renewed ardor are we prepared again to walk in that pleasant and peaceful path, from which we had unhappily wandered, when dismissed from the throne of grace with the encouraging words, employed by our compassionate Saviour on a memorable occasion, 'Go, and sin no more.' When those lips which were lately closed by shame and sorrow are opened by that merciful Being, 'who forgiveth all our sins, and healeth all our infirmities,' how naturally shall we hasten to repeat the hymn of the inspired psalmist, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.'

But, lastly, prayer comprehends in its more general acceptation, that praise and adoration of the Divine Being, which is founded on his attributes, and supposes a deep impression of his glorious perfections. And is it not, my brethren, a distinguished honor, that we are permitted and encouraged to acquire a knowledge of the character of Him, who fills the uni-

verse with his presence; who is without 'beginning of days,' or 'end of time;' who said 'let there be light, and there was light; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast;' who directs the hosts of heaven in their courses, and governs the innumerable worlds, which the discoveries of modern science have brought to our knowledge, by his wisdom and his power? What, indeed, can more ennoble and exalt the mind of an intelligent being, than the contemplation of the divine perfections, as illustrated by the wonders of nature and displayed in the truths of revelation? Of what a sublime gratification is he deprived, who, to all practical purposes, is 'without God in the world;' who sees without emotion the rising and the setting sun; who views with careless indifference the boundless expanse of waters; who breathes the clear and elastic air, which animates his spirits, and invigorates his faculties, and beholds the blue arch of heaven extended over his head, without at least an internal ascription of praise to the omnipotent and bountiful Creator of all things; who regards with little concern even the less frequent, and, therefore, more striking phenomena of that portion of the magnificent universe which is within the reach of human vision—the lesser light, appointed to 'rule the night,' obscured by the shadow of the globe we inhabit, and the resplendent luminary of day 'shorn,' for a season, 'of his beams,' by the occasional intervention of the lunar orb, and who is scarcely excited by the sudden appearance of the eccentric comet, whose visits are so 'few and far between,' to religious contemplation!

Such, my brethren, are some of the pleasures and advantages of prayer; but, without sincerity, and purity of intention, we can never fully enjoy them. If 'the heavens are not clean in his sight,' who is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' and if even his angels, those ministering spirits who surround his throne, 'are chargeable with folly,' we may well conclude, that even the prayer of the obstinately wicked will be accounted an abomination. It is not, indeed, the least important of the benefits, which we derive from an habitual attention to the duty

of prayer, that it tends to preserve us from sinful indulgences, by constantly suggesting the striking inconsistency between devotional performances and criminal actions. This consideration, through divine grace, may render the course of our lives more conformable to the language of our prayers; and thus lead us to avoid the danger of those, who 'draw near unto God with their mouth, and honor him with their lips,' while their heart is far removed from him. Prayer will soon become a tedious and uncomfortable ceremony to those who, in the use of its solemn and appropriate language, pronounce only their own condemnation. Its benefits can be justly appreciated by those only who duly estimate the value of time, and the awful realities of eternity, of which the blessings are suspended on the diligent cultivation of that spirit, which alone can qualify us for the worthy performance of this sacred duty, and prepare us to unite in the triumphant song of that 'innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect,' who are employed in ascribing 'salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.'

SERMON VIII.

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THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

I JOHN I. 8, 9.

IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

From these words I shall take occasion to make a few remarks on the forgiveness of sins;—*first*, as a Christian doctrine;—*secondly*, as a Christian attainment.

I. To those who have lived under the general influence of the Gospel, forgiveness of sins may seem a matter of course. Accustomed as we are to the accents of mercy, we do not readily appreciate the blessing or the difficulty of forgiveness. But go amongst a heathen population, where the light of the Gospel is not seen, where no angel of good tidings proclaims the message of peace, and no heavenly choir announces the good will of Heaven to men; and in the barbarousness of a cruel superstition, its horrid penances, the sacrifice of children, the voluntary and involuntary immolation of human victims, and in the desperateness of obstinate wickedness, you may see the effects of their deplorable ignorance of the propitiousness of the divine character. And there too may be learned that there occurs to the mind of a sinner a natural and a formidable difficul-

ty in the way of understanding or receiving the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin. That sense of guilt which follows the commission of sins, even in cases of wonderful ignorance and stupidity, creates a distrust of the divine mercy, and destroys most effectually such a confidence in God's forgiveness as might enable the sinner to reap the benefit of the doctrine.

Or, go to the pages of unevangelized theology ; to the wise men of antiquity, and you will find a silence on the subject of forgiveness, a darkness, a difficulty that undermines and at length overthrows the whole fabric of their religion, as inefficient and unsuited to the character and the wants of men. Some reasons why God should forgive sins, or some decisive assurance that he will forgive, were necessary ; neither of which were to be found in their philosophy.

Although in the estimation of a large class of mankind it may seem of little importance whether there be any foundation for the doctrine of forgiveness or not ; though the thoughtless and worldly, who live for the enjoyments and acquisitions of the present life, may deem it sufficient for their present purpose that they have some general indefinite notions of the divine benevolence, the foundation of a hope as shadowy and undefinable ; yet when a man begins to feel in earnest his need of religion ; begins to see the relation in which he as a sinner stands to his Maker and Benefactor ; when he learns the extent of his delinquency from what the law requires, and the unchangeable equity of the divine proceedings, the question of forgiveness, then, becomes an interesting one, and at the same time the subject assumes an appearance somewhat alarming. Serious difficulties present themselves, and the least degree of doubt on a point of so much interest and importance, is exceedingly distressing. And with these newly acquired views and sensibility, it requires some positive evidence, some strong assurance from God, that he can and will forgive sins, in order that he may obtain any peace of mind, or indulge any satisfactory hope. And were it not, that the Gospel inculcates this doctrine unequivocally ; were it not, that we have the strongest attestation of its

truth in the sufferings and blood of the Redeemer, we might see sinners thronging the road to despair, and returning from their distressing convictions to a more obdurate iniquity. The truth, when it is understood and felt, often creates an alarm which renders it an exceedingly difficult matter to convince the penitent offender that there is pardon for him. There was occasion, and God hath indeed seen fit to establish the doctrine by his promise, and to confirm it by an oath. 'I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, *as I live*, saith the Lord.' 'That by two immutable things,' in respect to either of which 'it was impossible for God to lie; we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.'

The mysteries of redemption are described as things which even the angels desire to look into. And can it be doubted that the announcement of the divine mercy to sinful men was *to them* matter of wonder, as well as of joy? They were aware, from their acquaintance with the character of God, that he must set himself against all iniquity. They knew that it was impossible that he should countenance rebellion against himself. And until the doctrine of forgiveness was established by unfolding the way in which it might be exercised without violating the essential attributes of the divine nature, the condition of man as a sinner must have been considered by them one of hopelessness and despair. Indeed, there are difficulties obvious to limited capacities; difficulties which the sinner himself feels so soon as he becomes deeply sensible of the real heinousness of his sin, and has a right impression of the character and perfections of God.

The subserviency and obedience of his own creatures to the sovereign Creator of all things, the source of all beings—is a duty as binding upon the conscience of every intelligent being as it is obvious to every capacity. It is a thing of course, and which every considerate being acknowledges to be of course. And whether God hath promulgated his laws in form and language, or not; whether he hath specified the penalty of diso-

bedience or not; every one feels and knows that, so far as God hath revealed his own character to his creatures, his law is a conformity on their part to the moral perfections of his character; and the penalty is the natural consequence of an irreconcileable opposition to omnipotent power.

But God *had published* his law to man, and *had announced* the penalty, with the solemnity of form and manner which belongs to legal proceedings. He had pledged his word for the death of the transgressor—'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' By the transaction thou art condemned.

Now, when you consider how much of the happiness of all the celestial intelligences is derived from contemplating the perfections of the divine character, and that their security and blessedness depend upon the immaculate and immutable nature of those perfections; when you consider that the ineffable enjoyment of the Deity himself must depend upon the absolute perfection of his attributes, you perceive that all the happiness and security of intelligent beings, including even that of the great First Cause, seems to depend on the veracity of the divine character, pledged for the punishment of sin. In this state of things it was not easy to see what there was for the pardon of sin, or how the offender could be spared from punishment, without lending that countenance to iniquity which would scatter the seed of misery, insubordination and destruction throughout the universe of God's creation. The essential nature and truth of the divine character seemed to require that the sinner should be pursued with merited vengeance. The legal equity of the divine proceedings seemed to require that the general interest should be secured at the expense of the rebellious offenders. There did, indeed, seem to be no way in which favor could be shown them without affording some direct or indirect sanction to iniquity. If the most sacred law might be violated with impunity, and the most solemn sanctions of the Supreme Being might be evaded, what restraints upon vice were left; what terror in the threatening of God, or what hope in his promise?

When man, therefore, had become a sinner, and had entailed iniquity upon his race, to the comprehension of all finite minds there could appear no other natural consequence but that 'the soul that sinned should die.'

And besides this, there was a difficulty in the way of the sinner's restoration to the divine favor and forgiveness, arising from another quarter. There is in sin a natural oppositeness to the holiness of God's character, as well as to the enjoyment of his favor. When wrong is done knowingly and habitually, the man feels in his heart a sensible hostility to the purity, and presence, and power of God. There is a disposition to regard him as an enemy, and the feelings inevitably array themselves against the submissiveness and virtues of religion. Sin works in the soul not only a disqualification for true happiness, but a deep opposition to the means of happiness. An alienation of feeling, that raises an obstacle to reconciliation, not easily removed. By feeling that God is our enemy, we cherish enmity to him, and it is this that contributes much to the hopelessness of the sinner's condition. Before a reconcilement can be effected, some measures must be taken by God to subdue this estrangement of feeling. The overture must be made by him whose authority has been contemned and insulted, and whose veracity requires to be established and honored; must be made to man, who has exposed himself to merited punishment, and is persisting in his daring rebellion. Under these circumstances, it is indeed wonderful that mercy should have been offered. And the sinner, who suffers the influence of these difficulties on his mind, whether he be aware of their origin or not, requires evidence of the most convincing and striking kind, that God is in fact willing to reconcile the world to himself. The case requires an expense of pains, not only to vindicate the truth and equity of the divine proceedings, but as much to woo the sinner, the party in this breach that has placed himself at such fearful disadvantages. Yes, to win the transgressor himself to a belief and acquiescence in the gracious terms of forgiveness and acceptance.

The Gospel discloses a scheme of salvation adapted to this state of things. All these difficulties, divine wisdom and benevolence has so far removed, as that salvation can be offered to man on the easy conditions of repentance and faith. And, at the same time, has provided the most operative and affecting means of convincing the mind and of humbling the heart.

Whatever may be the difficulty of comprehending fully the nature of Christ's atonement, it is believed that facts sufficiently attest the efficacy of the doctrine. In the minds of all those who receive it, it *does magnify* the law and make it honorable. In the view of all but the rejecters of salvation, the practical effect of the Saviour's sufferings is secured. Justice, unimpeached, guards the sanctity of the law, and preserves the doctrine of forgiveness from licentious consequences. The love of Christ constraineth believers to devote themselves to the cause of holiness; constraineth them to live to him who hath bought them with a price—the precious blood of Christ. In the sight of all holy beings, the legal difficulties are removed; a ransom is found in the blood of Jesus. By his propitiation for sin, the righteousness of God is manifested in the forgiveness of sins. 'He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth.'

And when the sinner stands convicted at the bar of his own conscience, and his sins put themselves in such formidable array as to threaten the extinction of hope, and to rouse up the feelings of desperate hostility, the appeal in proof of the propitiousness and benevolence of the Deity is then most strong and convincing. When every other ray is shut out, and there is but one point from which the hope of divine mercy can come, it beams from that point with an amplitude and richness of godlike munificence. God has attested his willingness to forgive sins by the most extraordinary acts of grace that the human mind is capable of conceiving. 'God so loved the world'—so desired the salvation of men—that 'he spared not his only begotten Son, but delivered him up for us all;'—delivered him up to a life of suffering and insult, and to a death of torture and ignominy;—delivered him up for the salvation and hope of those

who were enemies to his character, and hostile to his government. Here is demonstration of the divine placability. It is the kind of evidence precisely adapted to overcome the obstinacy of the convicted sinner. It is striking. It is melting—when it is felt it is overpowering. It does subdue the perverseness of rebellious spirits. It brings the haughty soul into captivity to the obedience of Christ, to the willing and patient service of so gracious a master.

II. I will now further remark on the forgiveness of sins as a Christian attainment. How many, mourning over their unworthiness, have felt their hopes sinking under the burden of sin, and perhaps have sighed for the happy lot of those who were permitted to behold the Saviour when he was on earth, and to receive from his own gracious lips, or his look of compassion, the unequivocal declaration of divine pardon—and perhaps have been tempted to wait and to hope for some supernatural or extraordinary assurance and persuasion that their sins are forgiven them. But as no such assurance can be reasonably expected, how may we certainly obtain forgiveness, and what is the satisfactory evidence of our being the subjects of it?

Let us remember that God is infinitely exalted far beyond the impotent rage of all his rebellious creatures. Though our sins are abhorrent to his nature, they can no more disturb the tranquillity of the divine mind, than they can overthrow the foundations of the eternal throne. Our sins may injure ourselves. They may do mischief to our fellow-men. But whatever concern God may take respecting them, whether to punish or to forgive, must be dictated by independent goodness; a pure exercise of disinterested benevolence. His hatred of sin, whatever it be, is not that passion which disturbs the peace and brings disquiet into the mind. The divine vengeance which inflicts upon the sinner a merited retribution, is not that feeling which rankles in the bosom of the revengeful, and which is as fatal to the enjoyment of him who cherishes it, as it is to the safety of its victim. Sin is, indeed, the opposite to the divine perfections, and can never be regarded of God with compla-

cency till he renounces the essential principles of his own existence. But that he frets himself because of evil doers; that the divine mind is subject to the corroding effect of a vindictive spirit; or that the forgiveness of a sinner implies an exercise involving the happiness of the Deity, we must not believe. The same unfailing goodness, the same unalterable benevolence, directs his counsel, whether the sinner be consigned to deserved punishment, or made a monument of mercy. He is the same God, that changeth not; the same in his being, his attributes, his affections. Therefore, whatever be the change that takes place in the relation between God and the sinner, when iniquity is forgiven, it must be effected by the change of the sinner. The change must be in the creature, since none can be predicated of the Creator.

In the administration of his universal government, it is the dictate of Infinite Goodness to regard the general welfare of all his subjects; and when a part of his nobler creation, to whom he has committed the dignified trust of moral freedom, in the exercise of an agency for which they are rightfully accountable, do separate their interest from that of the rest; when they do voluntarily seek their welfare in absolute inconsistency and opposition to the happiness and safety of the whole, it is but the exercise of kindness, it is mercy and benevolence in God, to guarantee the well-being of his faithful subjects by the sacrifice of the rebellious; and the question whether they can be forgiven is rightly resolved, not into the question whether the divine feelings toward their character can be changed, but whether any thing can be done for them, or in them, which will remove the necessity of their punishment, and overrule the natural and penal consequences of their sins.

And as no change in God can be expected for the pardon of the sinner, so, by the riches of his grace, none is necessary. No preparation, which the administration of the moral government of God seemed to require, has been left unmade. 'All things are now ready.' All things are now ready in respect to any general consequences that might accrue from the exercise

of pardoning mercy. The sinner is the only party in this transaction that admits of change, and to his own heart and character is limited the only preparation that remains to be made.

If, therefore, any of you remain unreconciled to God, the fault is altogether in yourselves, and you must look that the evil be cured in your own hearts, if it be cured at all. If, being impenitent, you feel that the relation you sustain towards God is one of hostility, be assured that he can never be different from what he is now. Nothing can be done, and, through his provident mercy, nothing remains to be done, but that which must be accomplished in yourselves. Whatever be the prospect of reconciliation, and whatever be the means of effecting it, those means must be ultimately directed to the renewal of your own disposition and feelings. God neither changes, nor needs to change, in order to your forgiveness. The same divine benevolence is in exercise, the same disinterested kindness after your pardon as before.

The conditions of divine forgiveness proposed in the Gospel, are repentance and faith. Sin has disaffected the mind of the sinner towards God, and produced its ruinous effects upon the heart. By the exercise of repentance, deep and genuine, this unhappy effect is counteracted; by the operation of faith through divine grace, a change is wrought in the affections and character, which, as the only remaining thing necessary to pardon, establishes immediately a new relation to God; and forgiveness follows, as certainly as if it were audibly pronounced by the lips of the Saviour. So soon as the heart becomes disaffected toward sin, and rightly affected toward the divine character, our sins and iniquities are remembered no more against us. So far as we are delivered from the commission of sin, and its effects upon our feelings towards God, we are obviously pardoned. Nor could we have better evidence of our acceptance with God, were a voice from heaven to pronounce our pardon.

But we must not dream of the forgiveness of sin while we live under its power, and so long as we are not actually deliv-

ered from its polluting influence on the affections and character. The effects of sin on the feelings constitute, in part, the punishment of sin; and so long as we suffer the punishment of sin, how can we be said to be pardoned?

In the exercise of humility and penitence, and with a heart disposed to justify and love our Maker for what he already is, let us go to him for the mercy we need. '*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE LATE

RT. REV. REGINALD HEBER, D. D.

Lord Bishop of Calcutta.

Life nor death shall us dissever
From his love who reigns forever.
Will he fail us? never, never,
When to him we cry.

Sin may seek to snare us,
Fiery passion tear us,
Doubt and fear and grim despair
Their fangs against us try:

But his might shall still defend us,
And his blessed Son befriend us,
And his Holy Spirit send us
Comfort ere we die.

HYMN FOR WHITSUNDAY.

BY THE SAME.

Spirit of Truth, on this thy day,
To thee for help we cry,
To guide us through the dreary way
Of dark mortality.

We ask not, Lord, thy cloven flame,
Or tongues of various tone;
But long thy praises to proclaim
With fervor in our own.

We mourn not that prophetic skill
Is found on earth no more;
Enough for us to trace thy will
In Scripture's sacred lore.

We neither have nor seek the power
The demons to control;
But thou, in dark temptation's hour,
Shalt chase them from the soul.

No heavenly harpings soothe our ear,
No mystic dreams we share;
Yet hope to feel thy comfort near,
And bless thee in our prayer.

When tongue shall cease, and power decay,
And knowledge empty prove,
Do thou thy trembling servants stay,
With faith, with hope, with love.

ASCENSION DAY.

BY THE SAME.

'Sit thou on my right hand, my Son!' saith the Lord.
'Sit thou on my right hand, my Son,
Till in the fatal hour
Of my wrath, and my power,
Thy foes shall be a footstool to thy throne.'

'Prayer shall be made to thee, my Son,' saith the Lord.
'Prayer shall be made to thee, my Son,
From earth and air and sea,
And all that in them be,
Which thou for thine heritage hast won.'

'Daily be thou praised, my Son,' saith the Lord.
'Daily be thou praised, my Son;
And all that live and move,
Let them bless thy bleeding love,
And the work which thy worthiness hath done.'

SERMON IX.

BY THE REV. JAMES MONTGOMERY, D. D.
*Rector of St. Stephen's Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.**

THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

MARK XVI. 15.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE.

My Brethren, what an awful interest and importance are imparted to this command of the Saviour by the circumstances under which it was given! Having triumphed over death and burst the bars of the grave, he mysteriously appeared to his doubting and disconsolate disciples, and after 'upbraiding them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen;' and with his mind occupied with anxiety and interest about the future advancement and diffusion of the gospel, he uttered this command, which was thus enforced by all the *authority* with which his *resurrection* had stamped his pretensions as the divine Instructer and Saviour of the world. It was moreover the *last* command he *ever* gave! How powerfully must this consideration have impressed the sense of its obligation: and constrained a prompt and devoted obedience to his behest. And

*Preached in St. Stephen's Church, Philadelphia, on the occasion of a collection in behalf of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

accordingly no sooner was he received up *into heaven, to sit on the right hand of God*, than the eleven 'went forth, and preached *every where*, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.'

Nothing is more refreshing to the serious mind than the contemplation of the rapid diffusion of the gospel during primitive times; nor does any thing afford more encouragement to those hopes which look forward to its future *universal* dominion.—Even in the age of the apostles, the glad tidings of salvation were sounded from Parthia eastward, to the western extremity of the then known world. Wherever Jew or Gentile was to be found, the gospel, which was to the one a *stumbling block* and to the other *foolishness*, was proclaimed by its first heralds; and, aided by the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, became to multitudes of believers the power of God unto salvation. Those holy men unfurled its banners, and, under a constraining sense of the obligation of the high command of their divine Master, and confiding in the assurance of his presence and protection, marched resolutely forth. On every side the darkness which had covered the nations was dispersed by the light of truth. The altars of an impious idolatry crumbled into dust. The lying subterfuges of a vain philosophy were put to shame. And that very religion, which was but lately persecuted and despised, whose blessed Founder himself had not where to lay his head; whose followers were at first timid and irresolute; whose very genius was irreconcileably opposed to all existing systems of philosophy and morals, to the deep-rooted policy of states, to all those opinions, and habits, and manners, which had become consecrated by time and riveted by prejudice, was now on her victorious progress to the homage of the nations. And even after its miraculous agencies had been withdrawn, and she was left to the fidelity and zeal of her votaries under the ordinary influences of divine grace, she continued conquering and to conquer; triumphing over the sophistry of the schools, and the delusion of paganism; supplanting altars inscribed to the unknown

God, by temples for the worship of Him, in whom we live and move, and have our being; challenging the countenance of the mighty of the earth; and eventually ascending the throne of empire, with the safety of which she became identified, and with the limits of which she was co-extensive.

But this signal triumph of Christianity, marks an era of ominous import. From this period, owing to the paralyzing influence of secular policy, and of worldly alliances, she began to retrograde. The fine gold of her purity grew dim—and her whole character became deteriorated. In this state of spiritual depression, few were the devoted heralds of the cross who went forth in the ardor of primitive zeal, and in the confidence of primitive faith, for the conversion of the nations. And the assertion may be hazarded, that in the long tract of time which has intervened between that and our own day, the exertions and success in this godlike work have borne as little proportion to the spiritual urgencies and destitutions of that interval, as to the splendid conquests and the devoted efforts of the short antecedent period. We are aware we ought to make this assertion with some qualification; and grant that there are some redeeming exceptions to this long reign of apathy; some luminous traces in this spiritual darkness. But these, like the stars which twinkle in the canopy of heaven, serve only to relieve the sway of night, without destroying its dominion.

And even in our own day, distinguished as it is, in the comparison with those that have gone by, by a more diffusive zeal in the cause of Christ, and boastfully called the era of *religious effort*, how puny are the exertions which are making, and how inadequate the interest felt for the proclaiming of the gospel to those lying in the region and shadow of death! How incommensurate are both with the abundant means and facilities with which we are favored, and with the necessities which demand their application and improvement.

When it is considered that of the more than eight hundred millions of the human family, it is estimated that considerably

more than one half of that number are entirely destitute of the privileges, the hopes, and the consolations of the gospel, and are consequently groping in utter darkness, and sunk in the most abject degradation, the dupes of a debasing superstition, or the victims of a cruel and inexorable fanaticism, and that of the remaining number, which make up what is called Christendom, multitudes are merely *nominal* Christians; or the deluded votaries of a mutilated and counterfeit religion; or the blind adherents of a faith which, like the body without the animating spirit, is dead and unprofitable: with these facts in view, let the question be put—and let it be faithfully answered. Are the *aggregate* exertions of Christians of our day at all proportioned to the spiritual necessities of the world? Is there, in this our thrice blessed country, where all the moral agencies for the missionary enterprise are unshackled—and where the means for its prosecution are so abundant, an adequate sympathy in the wretched condition of those who are without hope and without God in the world?

And to come nearer home, have *we*, the members of our Apostolic Church in this country, so highly favored with spiritual privileges, and crowned with providential blessings,—have we made any contribution to this great work, at all proportioned—I will not say, to the imploring calls upon our sympathy and interest, and to our responsibilties—but even to the efforts of other communions, considered as far below us in whatever regards a primitive and orthodox faith; a holy, fervent and scriptural worship; and an apostolic constitution of the ministry; deficient and meagre as these efforts have confessedly been? How shall we answer this question? Must we not take shame to ourselves, and make the humiliating confession that we have been hitherto blameably indifferent in this high work of Christian charity? Do not the greater part of us seem to have forgotten the obligation of the command, '*Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?*' Or if not forgotten, where shall we look for an adequate exhibition of the spirit and the conduct it would

prompt? Where shall we find that influential and constraining sense of the duties it involves, which displays itself in a holy emulation of primitive zeal? While we hear much said, in pity and indignation, about the intrusive sway of the *crescent* where once the *Cross* displayed its triumphs; and many a lament, that the abominable impostures, the lying vanities and the horrid sensualities which the former symbolizes and upholds, should supplant the divine truth, the eternal realities and the heavenly purity, of which the latter is the characteristic emblem; while we often deplore the prevalence over the fairest portions of our globe of a vain superstition, and are grieved that beings, endowed like ourselves with the excelling faculty of reason, should become the victims of its senseless delusions and of its deadly spells; yet where, after all, is that deep sense of spiritual thraldom; of alienation from God; of destitution of all the consolations which cheer the pilgrimage of this life, and of all the hopes which gild the prospect of a better? Where that efficient sympathy, which, glowing even at the physical and temporary distresses of a brother, kindles into a blaze at the recital of his spiritual maladies, and anxiously directs him to the *balm in Gilead* and to the *Physician* there? Ah! my brethren—have we not cause to apprehend that a general apathy has seized upon our souls, and paralyzed their spiritual sensibilities,and their noblest aspirations? that the sense of the obligation of the divine command has been too long dormant in our minds—that we have too long boasted of the privileges, and enjoyed the rich blessings, which belong to the disciples of Christ, without giving proof of our sincerity and allegiance, by a devoted obedience to his *last* command? And yet is not that command as obligatory upon *us* as upon those to whom it was originally given—and is it not equally *our* bounden duty to do all that in us lies in the great work of subduing the world to the obedience of faith?

My Brethren—you cannot but give me an affirmative answer. And yet, though theoretically acknowledged, is not that

command practically disregarded and contemned? It would seem that a sincere sensibility to its obligation, would display itself in all the correspondent agencies by which it may be accomplished! What shall I say then to excite you to a becoming sympathy in the glorious enterprise to which your Saviour calls you? Shall I prove to you that his command did not respect exclusively the apostles to whom it was delivered? That it contemplated the universal diffusion of the gospel; the preaching of the glad tidings throughout the habitable globe; the subjugation of *all* the nations to its dominion; and that as this was not intended to be consummated within the apostolic age, the obligation must have descended to their immediate successors; that they evinced their understanding of it, by practically emulating the zeal and interest of the heralds who had gone before—and that the command will remain unchanged and binding so long as a single spot of our earth continues unblest with the light of truth, or a single sinner remains unconverted to the faith? Need I say that there is at present as much occasion and scope for missionary exertion, as in the very days of our Lord and his apostles; and point you, for proof of the assertion, on one hand, to the thousands who yet groan under the very yoke of legal and ceremonial bondage from which it was their steadfast purpose and unceasing effort, to deliver their Jewish kinsmen; and on the other, to the wide spread desolations of that same idolatry which stirred the spirit of Paul at Athens, and against the abominations of which he, with all his devoted compeers, waged a relentless war? Need I say that paganism is at every period and every where, essentially the same; and that, however dignified with the name of an *elegant mythology*, and tricked out in all the refined and fascinating graces of an unsanctified taste, is yet, in all its modifications, ignorance of the true God and of his attributes; a bondage under the power of Satan, a state of spiritual death, an alienation from the divine favor? Need I remind you that this was precisely the view which the Apostles took of the subject in their day, when they preached that men

should turn from these idolatrous vanities to serve the living God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent; that such, in their estimation, was the condition of the Heathen, as contrasted with their own happier lot, as *children of God*, and *joint heirs with Christ* of an eternal inheritance *purchased with his precious blood!*

If these things be so, then, surely you will acknowledge that the command of the Saviour is upon you,—that it is as incumbent upon you to cherish an interest in the spiritual wretchedness of your fellow men, and to exert yourself for their relief, as it was upon those who received the command from the mouth of the Master himself.

Why then is it not equally obeyed? On this subject I dare not flatter you with any other explanation than such as truth will warrant; and my answer is—*because we have not the same sense of the value and importance of the gospel* as influenced the hearts and conduct of its primitive followers. Did we possess correct apprehensions of the personal importance of faith to every individual under heaven; did we recognize the gospel as the *power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*, did we truly estimate it as containing the only remedial provision suited to our apostate race; as unfolding to offending man the only door of access to his offended Maker; did we thus consider the subject, we should not only be impelled to mould our own hearts, to regulate our own conduct, and to animate our own hopes, by its disclosures; but, in gratitude for the unspeakable gift, and in the exercise of that diffusive spirit of benevolence, which essentially belongs to the gospel, and must be imbibed in some degree by all its true disciples, we would be solicitous to extend it to every one within the sphere of our exertions, who might be a stranger to its consolations and its blessings; we should indulge an ardent interest and sympathy in the moral and spiritual wretchedness of the nations who *know not God*, and gladly and abundantly contribute to its relief, by all the means in our power, our personal services, our influence,

our wealth ; or if these be wanting, our *prayers*, which of themselves can draw down blessings on the work of evangelizing the world ; and, without which, all other means will be unblest.

But how shall I impress you with an adequate *sense of the value and importance of the gospel?* Shall I direct you to the compassionate and benevolent Jesus, to learn from him a proper estimate of the subject? Behold him, then, while commissioning his apostles, forewarning them *to beware of men, for they would deliver them up to councils, and scourge them in their synagogues—that they should be brought before governors and kings for his sake—that the brother should deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child—that the children should rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death —that they should be hated of all men, for his name's sake.* Now would the Saviour, whose characteristic was benevolence, who went about doing good not only to the souls but to the bodies of men, who delighted in the exercise of charity and love, and for the relief of human suffering and wo wrought many of his miracles ; would he have commissioned his faithful followers, those whom he *had loved to the end*, to a work, in the prosecution of which, by his own assurance, they could expect nothing but contempt, and persecution, and suffering, and death, without a full conviction of the *paramount importance* of the gospel, so important to the spiritual and eternal interests of those whom he came to save, that it was to be proclaimed, at whatever hazard to the comfort, the health, the lives of those whom he so tenderly loved? This single consideration would seem to me sufficient to awaken your sensibilities to the *value and importance of the gospel.*

And look at the conduct of his disciples in executing the commission, and learn from them their estimate of the matter. With the assured anticipation of encountering the most formidable trials and sufferings, they unhesitatingly went forth at their Lord's command, renouncing every thing dear to them—yea, counting not *their own lives dear ;* and met persecution and death with a

heroism which could have been inspired only by their sincere conviction of the truths which they avouched, and by their deep impression of their infinite importance to themselves, and to all to whom they were sent to proclaim them.

If these considerations be not sufficient to elevate your conceptions of the subject to their proper standard, let them be aided by your reflections on the nature of the Gospel. What is the Gospel? *good tidings!* to whom? to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The blessed Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost,—lost to all spiritual life—to the favor of God—to all hope of a heavenly inheritance. It is the loss of the SOUL, my brethren, which the Gospel was designed to avert. By your estimate of the value of your *souls*, then, judge of the value of the Gospel—and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.

Should this not suffice, let our last appeal to you be drawn from the infinite price paid for that redemption, which is the sum and substance of the Gospel. If God spared not his only begotten Son, but willingly gave him up to die, the just for the unjust; if that Son humbled himself even to the death of the Cross for us miserable sinners, and on his way to it endured every indignity, and insult, and suffering that were necessary to fill up the cup, the bitter dregs of which he was to exhaust before his atonement could be accepted, how transcendant must be the value of that Gospel which proclaims so mighty a deliverance, and discloses the terms and conditions upon which alone it becomes available.

Were we, by these considerations, duly impressed with a sense of the infinite importance of the Gospel, we should be prompted to obedience to our Saviour's command by the most influential motives that can possibly act upon the mind. The *glory of God* is the motive which ought to prompt all our actions: and in no department ought it to be more operative than in those exertions and plans which have in view the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The glory of God must be

eminently promoted by whatever tends to the furtherance and developement of that scheme which reflects, more than all things else, the glory of his infinite perfections; which, foretold by all the holy prophets since the world began; adumbrated by the institutions of the law; the grand object to which all the divine dispensations have reference, is unfolded to us in the Gospel in all the glory of spotless justice, unbounded mercy, and resistless power.

And is not a concurrence with God's counsels and designs, a promotion of his glory? *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done*, on earth as it is in heaven, was the supplication dictated by the Saviour himself, when he was anxiously directing the prayers of his disciples to those objects by which his Father would be most eminently glorified. And that it is the divine will that the Gospel should be proclaimed in all the world, who can doubt, that understands and believes those splendid predictions, with which the prophetic writings are replete; which look forward, with no dubious import, to the period, when on every spot visited by the Orb of Day, the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings—and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? This consummation, be it remembered, is to be effected, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, by human instrumentality and co-operation. And this consideration, while it plainly indicates our *duty*, directs us to those efforts by which we can best promote the glory of the Most High.

Nor is the propagation of the Gospel, less promotive of the good of man. Our compassion is easily excited by *temporal* suffering, and our benevolence readily exerted for its relief—How much stronger ought to be our sympathy with that which is *spiritual;* which affects not the *body*, but the *soul*; which issues not in *temporal* but *eternal* death? For this the Gospel offers the only remedy. It discloses the only way by which apostate man can be redeemed from sin and everlasting perdition, and rendered meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And it is this excelling property which supplies an additional

motive to obedience to the divine command to *preach the gospel to every creature.*

Influenced by such a sense of the value and importance of the gospel, and prompted by such *motives*—the General Convention of our Church, seven years ago, established "the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States," and it is in behalf of this institution, that the present appeal is made. And how shall I conciliate your interest, and secure your benefactions in its cause? need I remind you that the urgent wants of our *own* country, particularly those of her recent settlements to the west—where there are found, and whither are annually migrating many of our communion, who have torn themselves away from the privileges of the sanctuary, and from the sound of the preached word, and are doomed to the horrors of a spiritual famine, to a privation of the public means of grace, and exposed thereby to a declension of piety, to a depravation of morals, and to the loss of their souls—need I say that these wants cry aloud for relief, and that we are without necessary means? Our institution contemplates their relief—and makes them the object of that peculiar solicitude with which she regards her *domestic department.* But while she thus follows the scriptural injunction and dispenses her beneficence *especially* to the *household of faith*, she is not unmindful of the obligation of *doing good* to *all* men. And in her *foreign* department makes ample provision for the judicious appropriation of all the funds that may be contributed for foreign objects.

In both departments an humble beginning has been made. In the former several missionaries have been some time employed; and their success supplies abundant encouragement to our efforts to provide the means of increased usefulness. In the latter, providential hindrances have prevented, until lately, the accomplishment of our wish to have a missionary of this society on *foreign ground*—and we now rejoice in its happy consummation on the shores of Greece. May we not indulge the hope

that the classic associations which endear that country to the scholar; the cruel sufferings from her ruthless oppressors which give her a claim to the sympathy of the Philanthropist; and her enjoyment of a common faith, which, to the *Christian*, adds irresistible force to the appeal; will excite among us an efficient sentiment of compassion, displaying itself in a readiness to contribute of our abundance to *all their necessities*, and especially to those to which it is the peculiar province of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society to minister.

But there are other lands which invite our interest and exertions—and we owe it to ourselves, to the Church, and to God, to have our missionaries *there*. And here I feel assured that you have anticipated me in my reference, especially to degraded and benighted *Africa*. Oh, my brethren! what a debt we owe to Africa! Besides all the motives and all the claims which should prompt and demand our exertions for her spiritual amelioration, arising out of the general obligation resting upon our consciences to extend to her destitutions the life and hopes of the gospel, there are special considerations, constraining and irresistible, which should impel *American christians* to instant and efficient action in her behalf. Though not naturally implicated in the original guilt of that horrid traffic in human lives; yet the long and profitable enjoyment of its unholy fruits; the very existence at present in our land of African slavery; devolve upon us the imperative duty of making the only reparation for the wrongs and sufferings which have so horridly characterized that *trade of blood*.

Heaven grant that there may be diffused among us a more fervent and efficient sympathy for the spiritual destitutions of the nations that sit in darkness; and that it may prompt the liberal contribution of our means to enable the Society efficaciously to participate in the high duty of evangelizing the world! And let us not be deterred, my brethren, by any apprehensions of *diminishing* our means for *domestic operations*, which you may most warrantably prefer in your scheme of doing good. And

did I fear such a result I would not willingly be accessary to it. But I have no such dreads. On the contrary, the best wish I can indulge for the cause of *domestic missions*, is, that there should be a diffusive and a glowing concern in the *foreign* interests of the Society. For it always has happened, and, from the force of moral causes, ever will happen, that the prevalence of the latter exerts a most stirring and effective influence on the former; and that domestic missions are *there* and by *those* most adequately maintained, *where* and by *whom* most interest is taken in the *foreign* cause.

But whatever may be your preferences for either of these objects, they furnish no ground of opposition to the present appeal; inasmuch as the society allows you to choose between them, and to appropriate your contributions to one or the other as your own judgment may dictate; and it is pledged to apply them to their designated object.

Having in view these important ends, and with such judicious provisions for effectuating them, the "Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society," is now, for the first time, in this way, commended to your christian munificence: and it claims your *patronage*,

Because it is a cherished institution of your Church,

Because it is the best medium through which you can contribute your means and exertions to the great work of spreading the Gospel, and thus obey the most solemn and obligatory command of your Saviour.

Because your active interest in it is the best proof you can give of your correct appreciation of, and your decided attachment to the principles of your own church—

And if any additional incitement be wanting to awaken a suitable sensibility to these claims, let it be found—

In the praiseworthy example of other denominations of our country, whose noble efforts in the missionary cause are worthy of all commendation, and ought to *provoke* us to a holy emulation.

In the illustrious precedent set before us by that Church, to which our own "is indebted, under God, for her first foundation, and a long continuance of nursing care and protection;" to whose missionary zeal the church in this country, up to the period of the revolution, owed her very existence; which is now exerted, with augmented efficiency, to relieve the spiritual destitutions of her dependencies, and to magnify God's name among the heathen.

And in the consideration that we have hitherto done but little in the cause, compared with the abundant means with which we are blessed.

And, my brethren, remembering the talents committed to us, let us be impelled to their proper use and application by a sense of the obligation of the divine injunction, *freely ye have received, freely give*, and by a practical and constraining regard to that eternal rule, which will govern the scrutiny of the judgment day—"*From them to whom much is given, will much be required.*"

AFRICA.

A MISSIONARY HYMN.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM CROSSWELL.

When shall thy centre opened be?
When shall the veil that lay
Upon that land of mystery
So long, be torn away?
When shall the hallowed Cross be seen
Far in those sunny tracts,
Beyond the lofty mountain-screen
And thundering cataracts?

When shall the daily barks that bring
Rich lading to the sea,
Of plumes of gorgeous coloring,
And choicest ivory,

And incense of Acacia groves,
And costly gems, and grains
Of that most precious gold, wash'd down
By Abyssinian rains ;—

When shall they bear a freightage back,
More precious than those woods
Whose fragrance fills the Niger's track
In seasons of the floods ?
When shall each kingdom that receives
The gospel, learn to prize
The treasures hidden in its leaves
Above all merchandise ?

Then bread upon thy waters cast
Shall not be cast in vain,
But after many days are past,
It shall be found again ;
Then thy barbaric sons shall sue,
Nor nature's self resist,
An entrance for their kindred true—
The dark Evangelist !

HYMN FOR ST. THOMAS' DAY.

BY THE SAME.

When from their native Palestine
The twelve spread far and wide,
Alone he went from Salem's shrine
On to the Ganges' side ;
The green sward was his dying bed,
And from the crimson sod,
His blood, which Brahma's children shed,
Went reeking up to God.

On that foundation, long unsought
For eighteen hundred years,
A Middleton and Heber wrought,
And their successor rears ;
The Church for which his blood was spilt,
How can it be o'erthrown,
On prophets and apostles built,
With Christ the corner stone!

HYMN FOR ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

BY THE SAME.

With awful dread his murderers shook,
As, radiant and serene,
The lustre of his dying look
Was like an angel's seen ;
Or Moses' face of paly light,
When down the mount he trod,
All glowing from the glorious sight
And interview of God.

To us, with all his constancy,
Be his rapt vision given,
To look above by faith, and see
Revealments bright of Heaven ;
And power to speak our triumphs out,
As our last hour draws near,
While neither clouds of fear nor doubt
Before our view appear.

SERMON X.

BY THE REV. GEORGE WASHINGTON DOANE, A. M.
Rector of Trinity Church, Boston.

THE REIGN OF HEAVEN.

MATTHEW VI. 10.

THY KINGDOM COME.

THE terms 'kingdom of God,' and 'kingdom of heaven,' equivalent to the expression in the text, 'thy kingdom,' are of very frequent recurrence in the scriptures, and especially in those of the New Testament. That they are not always used in the same signification, must be apparent to the most ordinary reader of the sacred volume. When it is said, for instance, in one place, 'that the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened'—in another, that 'the kingdom of heaven is like a net, cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind'—and in a third, 'know ye not that the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God?'—is it not obvious that in each of these cases the signification of the term is different? I have selected these three passages as illustrative of the *three* principal uses of the phrase. The *first*, the influence of heavenly principles, the principles of religion, 'the reign,' as it were, 'of heaven,' in the heart, aptly

* This sermon, originally preached in Trinity Church, Boston, as one of a course of sermons on the Lord's Prayer, was also delivered, by request, before the Episcopal Missionary Society of Maine, in Christ Church, Gardiner

expressed by the 'leaven,' pervading the whole mass in which it is placed, and creating within it, when it was before dead and sluggish, a new and peculiar life. The *second*, the dispensation of the Gospel, the Christian Church, that spiritual society on earth, of which Jesus Christ is the head, into which, as men are admitted by baptism, on the profession of their faith, the bad may enter with the good, to be sorted and separated at the end of the world, when the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just. The *third*, the blessed and glorious state to which the righteous after death shall be admitted, when, freed from the troubling of the wicked, they shall enjoy perpetual rest and felicity in the presence of God—the Church once militant on earth having become, through the might of her Redeemer, the Church triumphant in the heavens. It is in the last of these uses of it, as expressive of the place or state of future happiness, that the phrase 'kingdom of heaven,' will most naturally, and by ordinary readers of the Scriptures, most frequently, be applied; the term 'kingdom,' being most commonly understood, in our language, of the *territory*, rather than of the *authority*, or *influence* of a king. To express the latter sense, which is clearly that of the two first cited passages, the word, '*reign*,' agreeing equally with the original, is, to an English ear, much better adapted—'the reign of heaven,' the influence of religion, in its application to the individual heart of the believer, is 'like leaven'—'the reign of heaven' upon earth, the Church, which is Christ's spiritual kingdom here below, is 'like a net cast into the sea, which gathereth of every kind.' It is when the individual believer, passing alike the present probation, and the future ordeal, of his faith, shall have been received at God's right hand, and, the purposes of the Gospel dispensation being fulfilled, the Church shall be exalted and glorified by the immediate enjoyment of the divine presence, that the term '*kingdom*,' in our sense of it, will become fully and literally appropriate, and 'the kingdom of God,' in heaven, constitute the home and the eternal happiness of the faithful followers of Jesus. The term, as it is employed in the text, is clearly comprehensive of these

three progressive meanings—so that when we say 'thy kingdom come,' we must be understood to desire, *first*, that the Christian religion, the influences of the celestial kingdom, now begun on earth, might more effectually rule in the hearts and lives of all those who profess themselves its subjects—*then*, that the number of them may be increased, by the diffusion of the Gospel, and the extension of the Church, to all those by whom they are not now professed and received—and, *finally*, that, the purposes of redemption being thus fully accomplished, God's kingdom would fully come, in the translation of all its faithful and obedient subjects to that high and holy place, in which the divine majesty essentially resides. In agreement with these views, the French translators of the Scriptures substitute in the present case, *reign*, for *kingdom*—their uniform version of the text being, 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; *may thy reign* come'—establish, Lord, in all our hearts, extend throughout all the world, the empire of thy heavenly grace—hasten, Lord, in thine own time, the empire of thy celestial glory!

'Thy kingdom come!'—There is a sense in which God's kingdom, his reign or empire, has from eternity existed, as Maker and Lord of all—and, especially, as the Creator and King of this material universe, of which we are, peradventure, but the smallest part. In this sense of it, the divine dominion is from everlasting to everlasting, is absolute, is irresistible. It cannot therefore be prayed for, as something future, but must be acknowledged with joy—for what greater blessing than to live beneath the sway of infinite wisdom, power, and love?—as actually present and supreme, 'the Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice!'—The kingdom here spoken of is God's *natural* kingdom or empire. It is his reign over the material world—by virtue of that Almighty power which, as it first produced it from nothing, so now it rules, upholds, and orders it, in all its parts, and properties, and purposes. The earth acknowledges its sway, when, in the fair vicissitudes of seasons and of years, stern winter chains her genial influences up, or when returning spring, with all the light and beauty of a new creation, fills the whole

air with balm, and all the land with bloom. The sea confesses it, the old unchanging sea, when in the bursting terrors of the storm, or in the sparkling of its "wild waves' play" upon the shore, it finds its ancient and perpetual barriers still the same—tossing itself, yet it cannot overpass them; roaring, yet it cannot prevail against them. And the high heavens proclaim it, when, obedient to the laws which he at first ordained, systems and suns pursue their glorious course—so wisely ordered, that from the time the morning stars first pealed their song of joy, the heavenly harmony has never been disturbed; so perfect in their time, that science, even human science, can foretell how often, in thrice three thousand years, the shadows of their glory will conflict, and find not even the variation of a single second in the whole magnificent result. So glorious in counsel, so wonderful in operation, is Jehovah of hosts! 'How great are his signs! How mighty are his wonders!' His kingdom of nature—is it not, compared with our brief span, 'an everlasting kingdom?' The dominion of his power and providence—is it not 'from generation to generation?'

But, besides his *natural* kingdom, absolute, irresistible, existing from eternity, there is another, a *moral* and *spiritual* kingdom, or empire, founded on the willing obedience of reasonable creatures—a 'reign of heaven,' to which, when it has been once authoritatively proclaimed, it is man's duty, without question, or controversy, to subject himself—an authority which cannot be resisted without sin, and yet, which man is absolutely free to receive, or to reject. Of this kingdom or reign, as God is the sovereign, graciously manifesting himself to men in acts of condescension and love, and soliciting their allegiance, not compelling it, so his revealed word, the Bible, the book of truth, the charter and covenant of promise, constitutes the statute law. John, sent of God, and promised, almost by name, seven hundred years before, proclaimed the coming or commencement of this reign, when, in the wilderness of Jordan, a voice was heard, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' It was proclaimed by Jesus, when, at the commencement of his

wondrous, self-denying ministry, he took up the strain which murmured from the dying lips of John, and preached, saying 'Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' It is for this *spiritual* kingdom, the reign of grace, the dispensation of the Gospel, the empire of heaven in human hearts, swaying them to holiness, ruling them in peace, guiding them to heaven —it is for this that we are taught to pray, 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come!'

But we are told, that it has come. Jesus proclaimed it in his life. Jesus founded and cemented it with his blood. Jesus, by the gift of the divine Spirit, accomplished it, and gave it perpetuity. True, it has begun to come. The gospel dispensation is in course of proclamation to the kingdoms and nations of the whole world. The CHURCH, divinely established, divinely preserved, divinely governed, opens wide her doors, for the reception of all who will come in to her, and be at peace. She is complete in her divine head, Jesus, the Son of God. She is complete in her officers, the successors of the apostles, whom Jesus himself sent. The Gospel is her divine law. The Sacraments are the divinely appointed seals of her present privileges, and of her future promises. Christian believers are her subjects—'members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.' Still it has by no means come in that extent, and to that effect, which we are authorized to anticipate, and for which we are encouraged to pray. God's name is not yet known among the Gentiles 'from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same,' nor is there yet offered, in every place, unto his name, 'incense and a pure offering.' 'The kingdoms of this world' are not all become—nay, but the smaller portion of them have become—'the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.' Of the whole race of mankind, *more than three fourths* still grope among the idolatries of Paganism, the errors of Judaism, or the delusions of the false Prophet. Grievous errors divide, distract, and corrupt the little Christian flock—and even among them of the purest faith, where the light of truth shines brightest, and the Gospel trumpet gives the least

uncertain sound, there is so much of deadness in devotion, so much of conformity to the world, and so much of viciousness of living, that though the kingdom of God is visibly among them, they themselves are far away from it—exposed to the danger, as they realize the description, of those 'children of the kingdom,' who, for insincerity and unfaithfulness, were to see many coming 'from the east and from the west,' to sit down 'with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,' and be themselves 'cast out into outer darkness.' In view of these things, is there less propriety—may I not almost ask, is there less necessity—to offer now, than when it was first dictated, the prayer of the text? Whether we regard the feeble sway which it exerts in our own hearts, or the slow progress which it makes in the world, or the thick clouds which hide from all of us the issues of the dark, the distant, the eternal future, does it not become us all, with holy fervor, when we pray, to say, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come?'

'Thy kingdom come!'—We offer this petition, *first*, for ourselves, humbly desiring that the reign of God may rule in all our hearts, subduing every thought and desire to the obedience of Christ, and regulating our whole life, in all its actions and relations, by its pure and perfect laws. In all his dealings with mankind, God treats with them as with free moral agents. He reveals himself to them, he proclaims his will, he declares their duty, he proposes its reward. Whether they will comply or not with the conditions offered, rests with them. All may. Of none, is it declared, 'he must!' The allegiance of the divine kingdom must be voluntary, to be accepted. The homage and the tribute in which God takes pleasure, are hearts willingly offered, lives freely given up. Pardon for all sin is, indeed, proclaimed to all, through the atoning merits of Jesus, the Son of God—and the Apostle thence infers an argument of *constraining* love. 'For the love of Christ constraineth us,' he says—'because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all,' not to exempt any from obedience, but 'that they who live, should not henceforth live unto them-

selves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.' But the constraint of love—who does not know?—is no constraint at all; consistent, not only with the most perfect freedom, but, at the same time, the most powerful motive to exertion, and its best rewards. *Fear*, too, the fear of forfeiting God's favor, and of incurring the punishments that are reserved for sin, is, in the Gospel, frequently appealed to, to arouse the sinner, and to stimulate the faithful. But so far from being the odious fear of cowards and of slaves, the mere brute fear of bodily suffering, it is the fear of a dutiful child to offend a kind and generous father—the prudent fear of a wise man lest his own life be rashly jeopardized —the instinctive shuddering of true honor at the mere thought of meanness or injustice, at the thought of standing self-convicted, before angels and all worlds, of disrespect and ingratitude to the Sovereign of the universe, our Father who is in Heaven.— *The Holy Spirit*, too, the Scripture teaches us, is sent into our hearts, to convince us of sin, to direct us to the path of duty, to influence our affections to delight in, and our wills to pursue it, to sanctify us wholly, and to preserve us blameless, our whole spirit, and soul, and body, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But its influences move, not compel, us. It leads us by motives and persuasion, not by impulses and violence. It is 'the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts,' it is 'the spirit of adoption,' whereby, feeling that we are sons, not slaves, we are enabled and encouraged to say, 'Abba, Father?' Such is the nature, such are the conditions, of that spiritual reign, the dispensation of divine grace in the hearts of men, proclaimed in the Gospel of salvation. To offer in regard to it the prayer of the text, 'thy kingdom come,' is to declare, under circumstances the most solemn, and in the most explicit terms, our willing, and, since no man can owe fealty to two sovereigns, our undivided allegiance. And, in addition to this, it is to desire of him, in words which his own Son hath taught us—which to offer with insincerity therefore is to profane—that he would extend and establish in our hearts the empire of his holiness, bring them more and more in subjection to his laws, animate them more and more

with the disposition to do his will, withdraw them more and more from the control of earthly things, and strengthen and increase in them continually desires to be with him, and to be like him. Is it not, brethren, to pledge ourselves that the power which we invoke to aid us, we will not ourselves resist? Is it not to promise, sacredly, before God, that the authority which we invite, we will, with our best powers, obey? When the temptations of the world, then, and the lying vanities of life, strive to withdraw us from the service of the living God, can we doubt how we shall choose between them? When, from on high, the summons to our hearts calls, to go on steadfastly and uprightly in the path of duty, can we hesitate to obey? When, from among the lively emblems of the Saviour's bleeding love, the lingering accents of his last request invite us to commemorate with him, and with all saints, the painful purchase of our present freedom and our future hopes, can we refuse to hear, can we refuse to come? Ah, brethren, if we *can*—can doubt, can hesitate, can refuse—*can* we say, *ought* we to say, 'thy kingdom come?'

'Thy kingdom come!'—We offer this petition, in the *second* place, for others, less favored than ourselves. That which a good man prizes most, he most earnestly desires that others should also enjoy. The philanthropist would not possess his plenty, nor the patriot his liberty, alone. He would diffuse them wide as the genial sun, or as 'the casing air.' He finds—O blessed paradox!—that of all he ever had, that which he gave to others is the most his own. He feels—O admirable mystery!—that as the glorious heritage of freedom is enjoyed by more, it is enjoyed more richly by himself. Now, as the immortal transcends the mortal, as the soul's freedom is more glorious than the body's, so must the true Christian, in his desire that the reign of righteousness and salvation be extended to the whole world, exceed the desires of all other philanthropists, and of all other patriots. Like his divine Master, he 'would have all men to be saved.' Like his divine Master, he takes pity on the nations that are famishing for the bread of life. Like his divine Master, he has compassion on the multitudes, whom he

sees, at home, abroad—no matter where, in the wide neighborhood of the world—wandering, 'as sheep without a shepherd.' Like his divine Master, indeed, he cannot work a miracle for their spiritual sustenance; and if, like him, he should lay down 'his life for the sheep,' the poor offering would be nothing worth. But instructed by him, and in his own most gracious and prevailing words, he can pour out his fervent and effectual prayer—'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come!' O gracious Maker and Preserver of mankind, let 'thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations!'—Brethren, does not this prayer include all else that we can do? Does not God's reign extend itself by human instruments and human means? Did not the apostles, sent by Christ, begin, and must not others, 'of like passions,' carry on, and, under God, complete the glorious work? And must it not be done at your cost, with your help, with your influence? *Yours*, did I say, when all you have, and all you are, is God's? With the wealth,—I meant to say—the wisdom, the influence, which God, for his own purposes, has *lent* you! And dare you, can you, will you—is there a man that dare, that can, that will—insult the Lord of heaven and earth, by praying that his kingdom on earth may come, while he does nothing, gives nothing, says nothing, to promote its coming—while his hand clings, as with a death-grasp, to the gold that might supply ten thousand famishing souls, and conceals and turns away from them the light with which God has put him in trust, and which, poured out upon the groping nations, would turn all their darkness into meridian day? Ah, brethren, let not the hinderer of the word of truth, let not the hoarder up of what the treasury of the Lord demands, let not the laggard in the cause of God, and of his Church, presume to say, 'thy kingdom come!'

'Thy kingdom come!'—We offer this petition, in the *third* place, for ourselves, and all mankind, and for the glory of God, in the consummation of his plans of providence and grace. It is the promise which cheers and shall reward the faithful in

Christ Jesus, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived the things which God hath reserved for those who love him. The stupendous scheme of redemption, the glorious universal Church of the Redeemer here on the earth, is but the vestibule, they know, to the triumphant 'Church of the first born' in heaven. Willing, therefore, as they must be, to stand and serve here, in the lower courts of their Father's house, until the summons of return shall come, it is but natural that eyes and thoughts and heart should be turned upward to the heavenly mansions—and that, with David, panting after God, 'as the hart after the water brooks,' and, with Paul, desiring 'to depart, and be with Christ,' they should, from the full heart, pour out the Saviour's prayer, 'thy kingdom come!'—'O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O Lord!' —But, brethren, is there no danger that we may urge this prayer in our own wrong? Are we prepared, are we prepared, to meet our God? When he comes, let us all remember, he comes to separate between the righteous and the wicked—between them that have done good, and them that have done evil! Have we endeavored, by faith, and penitence, and love, to make our calling sure? Are we living now as men who love his appearing? 'Who may abide the day of his coming?' 'Who'—let each ask it of his own heart!—'who shall stand when he appeareth?' May God, in infinite mercy, give us all the grace to do so, for his dear Son's sake. And to Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three persons, and one God, shall be the glory and the praise!

SERMON XI.

BY THE REV. ABRAHAM BRONSON, A. M.
Rector of Zion's Church, Manchester, Vermont.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS I. 16.

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION, TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH, TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.

When St Paul was writing to the Romans, he exerted all his powers to make a full display of the gospel system, to illustrate its peculiar doctrines, and from them to deduce and enforce its practical precepts. As Rome was then the seat of power and learning, he adapted his discourse to the capacity of his hearers, and reasoned profoundly upon the holy faith. As there were already some christians at that place, he first mentioned his desire to visit them, 'that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift,—or rather, that he and they might comfort one another by their mutual faith.' His ministry having been successful among other nations, 'he was ready, as far as he was able, to preach the gospel at Rome also.' He was 'not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it was the power of God unto salvation,to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.'—In his subsequent discourse he shows, with sufficient plainness, why he was not, and others should not be, ashamed of the gospel.

I. The first reason, which he gives at large, is, that the gospel is necessary in order to men's salvation.—This necessity he proves from *reason* and from *revelation*.

As God is a being of infinite purity, his laws must be perfectly pure, and must require constant and perfect obedience. It would be inconsistent with the holiness of his nature to make laws, which should give any license to sin. In his view the smallest transgression is evil. The smallest wrong action or disposition is contrary to his law, and of course sinful in his sight. As then he views all sin with abhorrence, every fault, of whatever degree, is in its own nature sufficient to exclude a man from his favor. According to the eternal principles of justice, whoever deviates at all, becomes guilty.—And as a man can at no time do more than his duty, he cannot make amends for his past fault. It is his duty, for instance, to love God supremely at all times. Now if he fails of doing this at one time, he cannot do more than this at another time, and so can never atone for his past neglect. The law then, in its own nature, will forever exclude men from the enjoyment of God.

The same truth appears from *divine revelation*.—'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.' Our first parents sinned, and fell, and could never have been delivered without a Mediator. So their descendants 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,' and can be 'justified only through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'—Such was the case with the *Gentiles*, as represented in this first chapter. Though they had received no written law, yet the works of creation and providence were before them to teach them their duty, so that they had no excuse for disobedience. The light of nature sufficiently proved, that there was a God, and that they ought to serve him. Yet 'they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.' 'They worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator.' Not an individual among the heathen ever regulated his disposition and conduct exactly according to the best light that was afforded him; and therefore not one of them could be justified by his own righteousness. No man can be justified by a law, if he has ever broken it. And as all the Gentiles have transgressed even the law of nature, they

are condemned by it; and, as far as concerns the law, they must stand condemned at the judgment day.—From this condemnation the *Jews* might imagine they should escape, because they had a law revealed to them from heaven, and were called God's peculiar people. But the apostle teaches them in the next chapter, that they have no reason to boast. Though a law had been given them from heaven, yet 'through breaking the law they had dishonored God,'—insomuch that 'his name was blasphemed among the Gentiles' by means of their sins. They brought disgrace upon the law, as many members of the christian church do upon the gospel, by neglecting its commands. There was not one individual perfectly holy among all the tribes of Israel. The very men, who dispensed the law, did not yield it a perfect obedience. The judges and prophets in different ages had come short; they were all sinners in the eye of the law, and could not merit salvation by their own works. Even those saints, who 'walked in all the commandments and ordinances blameless,' were required to offer sacrifice; which would not have been necessary, unless they had sinned. Thus St Paul declares, in the third chapter, 'that the Jews are no better than the Gentiles,'—'none righteous, no not one.' 'Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world be acknowledged guilty before God.'—Even *we that live under the light of the gospel*, are by nature in the same condemnation. There is not one among us, that has 'made his way perfect before God,'—not one that has always fulfilled his whole duty. When our Lord said, 'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone,' the people were all convicted by their own consciences, and no stone was thrown at the offender. So if every one would let conscience speak, we should need no other answer. The heart of the best man would plead guilty. The best man would confess and lament his errors, his faults, his sins,—would acknowledge that he has broken the law, that he has no merit to atone for his sins, and that he must depend entirely upon divine mercy for pardon and acceptance.—Thus the law can justify no man, because no man fulfils it. 'God hath concluded all under sin;' 'by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.'

From these considerations we learn the necessity of the gospel dispensation. All have fallen under the sentence of the law; and none could be saved, were it not for the mercy that is offered in Christ Jesus. The sin could not be done away without satisfaction, and no man could make satisfaction for his sin; of course a system of grace must be instituted, or no man could ever be saved. 'If there had been a law, which could have given life, then righteousness, or justification, might have been by the law.' But as all are transgressors, there can be no justification but through a covenant of grace. Such a covenant is set forth in the gospel. Those who 'have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, may be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins.' Here is the essence and glory of the gospel,—'that God may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' As 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' we are now under a gracious dispensation, which offers pardon of sin to all who repent and embrace the gospel.

This is not such a covenant as will save men, if they continue obstinate in their sins; if it were, I imagine the apostle would have been ashamed of it. But he was not ashamed of the real gospel of Christ,—not ashamed of that divine institution, 'which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' He was not ashamed of that gospel, 'which established the law,' instead of doing away its sanctions, and which saves men by reforming their hearts, and uniting them in faith and holiness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Of such a gospel he could make his boast. He could boast of a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and of a dispensation intended to save men by bringing them to repentance and newness of life.

II. Another reason for not being ashamed of the gospel is, that its benefits are offered to all mankind,—'to every one that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.'

The Jews were once the chosen people, favored with the

divine oracles, and with many other privileges above the rest of mankind. 'Jacob was loved, and Esau was hated,' without any regard to the 'good or evil,' which they might do. That is, the posterity of Jacob should be favored with greater means of spiritual improvement, than the posterity of Esau, or any other people.—But this distinction was to be done away at the coming of Christ. 'There is now no difference,'—as the apostle says in the tenth chapter,—'no difference between Jew and Greek; but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Jesus offered himself as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and as a ransom for all. His atonement, being made by an infinite and divine Being, was of infinite value; it was general; it was abundantly sufficient for every individual of the human race. His merits are an inexhaustible fountain of grace and salvation.

The calls of the gospel are given to all, inviting all to come and receive the blessing. Everything is offered freely, pardon and grace, without money and without price. 'Whosoever will may come, and take the water of life freely.'—True, the word has not yet extended,—the gospel has not been preached,—among all nations. But the spirit has been diffused, and has in some measure exerted its influence in every human being. In that respect all have the offer of salvation; and we may hope, that many, who never heard the Saviour's name in this world, have yet repented of their sins, and become spiritually united to him through the power of his grace.

But let us always remember, that the final blessing will be bestowed upon none but those, who repent and believe the gospel. 'The power of God unto salvation is only to those who believe;'—only to those, who have become convinced of their lost condition,—have lamented their sins, fled to Jesus for mercy, and had 'his love shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost.' True faith implies the whole of this gracious work, as also an earnest endeavor, in all things, to do the divine will.

Of such a gospel as this, offering its salutary favors to all returning sinners, we need none of us be ashamed. We may

rather glory in that divine goodness, which is so extensively displayed, and which has such a powerful tendency to lead men to repentance and salvation. As the offer of deliverance is made to all, we should not be ashamed of the threatenings, which are denounced to alarm the impenitent. If any refuse the offer, and finally perish in their sins, we may lament their melancholy *fate*, but must not be ashamed of the justice that condemns them. It would be inconsistent with the divine character to save impenitent sinners; and therefore we must not be ashamed of the terrors of the law, any more than we are of the mercies of the gospel.

III. A third reason why we should not be ashamed of the gospel, is the purity and excellence of its precepts.—These are set forth in the latter part of this epistle to the Romans. In the twelfth chapter especially there is a summary of christian duty, so concisely and so forcibly expressed, that it has always been considered, not only as a most excellent persuasive to christian virtue, but as a masterpiece of literary composition. The style is plain and simple and *forcible*,—every precept full of meaning, and like an ingot of pure gold, capable of being drawn out into an extensive compass. The more this passage is examined—the more plain will its force and beauty appear. 'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love—in honor preferring one another—not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:—rejoicing in hope,—patient in tribulation,—continuing instant in prayer,—distributing to the necessity of saints,—given to hospitality. Bless them that persecute you:—bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice; and weep with them that weep. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.' In a similar strain the apostle proceeds through this and the following chapter. He enjoins forgiveness and beneficence to enemies, submission to lawful authorities, and rendering unto all their dues. And finally he closes by exhorting us to 'cast off the works of darkness,' even all sin,' and to put on the armor of light,' even all righteousness, '—to walk hon-

estly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and enraging,—but to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ,'—follow him in newness of life.—Such are the pure and holy precepts exhibited in the gospel, and most powerfully and eloquently enforced in this epistle to the Romans.

And here let us notice the order of gospel doctrine and duty, as here stated by the apostle. First he speaks of the general sinfulness of man. Then he declares the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and the justification which the sinner can receive by believing in him. Next he mentions the peace of conscience and holiness of disposition, that flow from these exalted privileges. And lastly he enlarges upon the moral virtues, that should adorn the christian life. It is by faith that the sinner is justified;—but it must be such a faith as works by love, purifies the heart, and regulates the conduct, or it will not unite the soul to the Saviour, nor prepare it for his presence in glory.

And now, my hearers, from the whole tenor of our subject, we learn what is our situation and what is the way before us. Every careless sinner is in a state of condemnation before God. Every one that has not felt himself lost and depraved, as the gospel represents him,—every one that has not humbly loathed and abhorred his sins,and fled to the Saviour as the only refuge, has no inheritance in heaven. He is an outcast from the favor of God, and on the way to everlasting perdition.—And are not some of *us* in this situation?—Let every one inquire of his own heart.—Yes, some of us are alienated from God, having no love to him, no humble trust in the Lord Jesus, and no delight in his service. And if they continue thus, they can have no part nor lot in his salvation.—Let every careless soul be awakened, Let every impenitent sinner be alarmed. Let him feel, that the gospel will not save him, unless he humbly repents of his sins, and exercises such a humble faith in the merits and grace of Christ, as will overcome the world, and lead to all holiness of life. Let him examine himself, cast himself entirely upon the Saviour, and be ever employed in doing his will and preparing for his kingdom.

PROVIDENCE.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM CROSWELL.

The lilied fields behold!
What king in his array
Of purple pall, and cloth of gold,
Shines gorgeously as they?
Alas! however gay,
Their pomp is brief as bright,
It lives but for a summer's day,
And withers in a night.

If God so clothe the soil
And glorify the dust,
Why should the slave of daily toil
His providence distrust?
Will He, whose love has nurst
The sparrow's brood, do less
For those who seek his kingdom first,
And with it righteousness?

The birds fly forth at will,
They neither plough nor sow,
Yet theirs the sheaves that crown the hill,
Or glad the vale below.
While through the realms of air
He guides their trackless way,
Will faithless man alone despair?
Is he worth less than they?

SERMON XII.

BY THE RT. REV. THEODORE DEHON, D. D.
Late Bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

REVELATIONS xxi, 7.

HE THAT OVERCOMETH SHALL INHERIT ALL THINGS.

The amiable John, is well known to Christians, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Blessed with longer life than any of his colleagues, he was towards the close of it, distinguished by his Friend with some very honorable and extraordinary communications. An exile in the isle of Patmos, he was visited by his Lord; and, wrapped on the wings of vision, was carried into heaven, to admire its splendid arrangements, and to be made acquainted with things which were to come. For the glory of God, and the benefit of man, he recorded what he saw; and in his apocalypse, has stored such information, as no other mortal was permitted to acquire. But like the book seen in the hand of God, this is hard to be opened; and none perhaps will be able to unloose all its seals, till "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" shall universally prevail, and exhibit in his church triumphant, satisfactory illustration of all its mysteries. Still it is to be read and studied by Christians. "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." It is commendable to be found investigating the deep things which the Most High has revealed; it is right to be waiting at the pool, if perchance the angel may move the waters. The parts of the Revelation, which have had their accomplishment, may be understood by the diligent; and written for general improvement, it abounds with interesting descriptions, instructive allusions, and plain moral declarations. Such evidently is the passage which I

have selected for the subject of your present meditations. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." It is intelligible to all, and contains truths of as apt and important nature, as any we can contemplate.

In discoursing from it, it shall be my endeavor to shew, in the First place, what it is which we should overcome.

Secondly, to adduce the considerations, which should animate us to the discharge of this duty,

And, Thirdly, to recommend some rules for rendering the conflict easy and successful.

To overcome, implies an active, persevering, and effectual struggle. As such the Scriptures frequently represent the Christian's life. Every disciple of the Redeemer is enlisted under the banners of a chief, in defence of a cause against numerous and obstinate foes. He has a race to run, a warfare to conduct. Whatever is opposed to the spirit of the gospel, whatever comes in competition with the interests of religion, whatever thwarts or injures virtue, is to be vanquished and held in subjection. With every obstacle to purity and piety, he is perseveringly to struggle; for to yield, is desertion, and to desert, is death. In order, therefore, to understand what we are to overcome, we must ascertain the sources, whence opposition is made to our progress and perfection in the path of duty.—These are;

In the first place, a natural aversion from spiritual truth. The mind of man in its original state, found its chief pleasure in the contemplation of God, his moral government, and the rules flowing from spiritual relations. At the fall it became carnal. All relish for the truths of religion gradually was lost; and that which was its proper object became unpleasant. No longer does he find his best gratification, in contemplating and conversing with the Deity. No longer does he take delight in listening to the doctrines of religion. No longer does he find his highest satisfaction in those truths which affect only his soul. Reason grown self-sufficient, cannot readily humble herself to receive revealed instruction; and nature, made proud by her abasement, resents the men-

tion of her helplessness and depravity. The mind scorns truths, which it cannot comprehend; and attention is with difficulty induced to hearken to doctrines, whose nature is spiritual, and which respect an unseen world. It is this aversion from religious truths, partly owing to pride of mind, and partly to depravity of heart, which prevents many from entering the Christian career; and renders many who have entered, ignorant, or offended at the very essential and peculiar principles of their religion. To encourage and preserve this aversion from things spiritual; to engage the mind in doubting, disputing, and new modelling the doctrines of revelation; to hold, or distract, or beguile attention, when it would employ itself upon God, religion or the duties of devotion, is the artifice of the grand adversary, who first seduced man, and is constantly laboring to confirm his ruin. This is a most powerful obstacle to our religious progress; this we must overcome. We must conquer our propensity to hurry from the plain dry truths of religion, or to warp them to our own feelings and opinions. We must reduce our minds to their original spirituality, and struggle till we recover our appetite for the pleasures of religion. We must watch the wiles of the devil to deter us from coveting truth, break the fetters with which he would confine our minds to airy visions, and vanquish his constant efforts to hold us in bondage. In doing this, we shall defeat the boldest foe of our Redeemer, and most successfully overcome one principal impediment to our attainment of religious excellence, aversion from revealed truth.

Another source of opposition to our progress and perfection in the path of duty, is found in the allurements of the world. Things seen and present, most easily entice the affections from things unseen and future. We early enter the world. Its pleasures dazzle. Its pursuits gratify. Its business engages. Its examples affect. We conform to its customs, its opinions, its vices. We become slaves to the world. A thousand objects struggle for that ardent love, which undivided should be given to God. A thousand pursuits occupy

those faculties, which should be employed in recovering the dignity of our nature. A thousand pleasures engross the attention of that soul, which is immortal, and has eternal happiness to secure. But few of these objects, but few of these pursuits, but few of these pleasures, have any reference to our most important, our *only* important concerns. On the contrary, they wind themselves into our bosoms, and leave no room for matters of more consequence. By monopolizing our attention, the best of them interfere with the main business of life. When infatuated with the riches, honors, and pleasures of the world, seldom and cursorily do we think of the things which belong to our eternal peace. By their evil properties and trifling nature, many of them enfeeble our noblest powers, and corrupt the heart. How few pass through the world without contagion, and carry out of it that portion of purity, with which, though the children of corruption, they were born. By drawing to earth, while religion beckons to heaven, they all prove obstacles to our spiritual progress and perfection. "We cannot serve God and Mammon." On these accounts, the scriptures exhort, "be not conformed to the world;" "love not the world, nor the things of the world," for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." On these accounts, the Saviour when on earth lived unattached to its pleasures or pursuits, and marked with contempt its pomps and vanities. On these accounts, whosoever is born of God, and enjoys the promise in the text, must overcome the world. We are not, however, to understand by overcoming the world, a sullen contempt, a morose neglect of it. Nothing like this. It is at present our place of abode; and there are in it, objects which ought to interest, and enjoyments which ought to please us. All that is required is, that we do not covet its sinful, nor its artificial joys; that we do not consider any of its pleasures or pursuits as the prime object of our existence; that we conform to no one of its customs, at the expense of virtue; that when any of its allurements offers itself in preference to the promises of religion, we resist it with resolution and rise above it; that, in the lan-

guage of inspiration, "they who have wives, be as though they had not, they who weep as though they wept not, they who rejoice as though they rejoiced not, they who buy as though they possessed not, and they who use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Another very powerful impediment which we must overcome, is the system of vicious tendencies, the "body of sin," which we inherit from the first human pair. We must not only overcome our aversion from religion and the allurements of the world, we must "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts." In ourselves, lie obstinate enemies which we must subdue; in ourselves, we shall find the sources of most dangerous temptations. When man was first formed, his frame was void of guilt. His soul immaculate, pursued only its noble objects. His will unperverted, inclined only to goodness. His natural and necessary appetites, preserved the sphere, in which they were formed to operate. Innocence and harmonious subordination reigned in his nature, and not a movement of his affections, but displayed virtue. Alas, the spoiler came. His nature was rifled of its excellence. Vice fixed her residence in the human heart. Subverting the subordination ordained by God, she has made the soul a menial to the body; and this is pampered, while that is scarcely known. Destroying the restraints of reason, she has left the appetites loose; which like slaves possessed of usurped power, drag down in deep disgrace the rulers which once kept them in a useful sphere, and destroy the nature they were formed to preserve. To secure her empire, she has implanted in the bosom vile and malignant passions, as pride, malice, envy, selfishness, and many others, which constantly oppose and cramp the efforts of virtue to recover her lost influence. In short, she has so confused the order of nature, and so corrupted man, that virtue sometimes has to struggle for her very existence with lusts and passions, which spring forth unexpected, resisting the reproofs of reason, and unintimidated by the threats of remorse. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" and these,

though formed in the most perfect union, are now, "contrary the one to the other." In order to re-establish virtue in man, and to restore to him his loveliness; to render him worthy of that divine favor he has forfeited; this empire of vice must be broken; we must subdue "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" all the guards, the stratagems, the forces of sin, must be defeated; we must overcome our lusts, our passions, our affections, ourselves. This is not so hard a duty, as one at first thought would imagine. We are not required to eradicate the passions interwoven in our very nature, to deny our bodies all gratification, to hate and abandon ourselves. Religion is not so austere. She is a reasonable instructress. To overcome, is not to destroy. She only requires, that we have, and keep them under command; that we restore the empire to virtue; that we "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us." With the passions and propensities which debase the divine image in the soul, she would have us unceasingly struggle; and rather wear out life in the conflict, than not to overcome. She would have the body kept under, and brought into subjection; the passions obedient to control; and the whole system disciplined, like the corps of the centurion, who says to one "go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh, and to his servant do this, and he doeth it."

Lastly, in order to inherit the promise in the text, we must overcome the vexations and troubles of life. Here is the patience of the saints. These are most painful struggles. We must not only encounter enemies, but meet obstacles, as we journey through life. The road will sometimes be rough and uneasy; the weather dull, if not stormy. Here virtue must hold an arduous conflict, and needs the aid of her most powerful forces. Strong are the temptations of adversity. They disturb the quiet and piety of the soul, when others fail. They urge to discontent, to distrust of divine Providence, to weariness of being, to neglect of active duties, to depravation of heart and life. If afflictions do not reform, they are apt to

harden vice. When they do not invigorate, they depress virtue. Like heavy rains, they sometimes drench the plant they should nourish; and unless properly conducted, spread devastation. When the arch fiend wished to overthrow the piety and integrity of Job, he chose these weapons for the assault. "Doth Job fear God for nought. Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." His patience blazoned his worth, and strengthened all the excellencies of his life. In surmounting the difficulties and distresses of this state, many of the sacred heroes struggled and triumphed. The Author of our faith, encountered all the ills of mortality; and faithful to the end, was perfected through suffering. His disciples, in common with others, will have their difficulties. They must encounter too, the ridicule and scorn of the profane. The badge of their profession is a cross. These all will strive to rout the man from his strong hold; but with steadfastness they must be vanquished. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!"

But the second thing proposed is, to adduce the considerations, which should animate us in the conduct of this warfare.

In the first place, we have devoted ourselves to it as Christians. One main object of the Messiah's mission, was to destroy the works of the devil, and restore to our nature that purity and dignity, with which it was vested in the morning of creation. Connected with this, was the glorious design of ransoming us from death, and securing to us the inheritance of eternal life and blessedness. To promote these purposes of divine love, we are engaged, both by our interest and our vows. If life and happiness be valuable, we cannot but feel concerned for our salvation. If a covenant with the Most High be sacred, we are obligated to fight manfully under the banner of his Son. Enlisted as we are under the Redeemer, and for the accomplishment of such interesting objects, shall we make any compromise with his adversaries? Shall we be slaves to that body of sin which he came to subdue? Shall we yield to those allurements of the world, which

he condemned as counteracting the effects of his love? Shall we be vanquished, by the troubles and vexations of life, when he, the "Captain" of our hopes, endured the cross? Where is our courage; where is our loyalty to our Lord; where is our virtue; if after having put our hands to the plough we look back? How are we good soldiers in our Master's cause, if whenever the struggle becomes difficult, we temporize, or quit the field? We may choose whom we will serve; but if the Lord be our God, we must follow him. He is a great and gracious God, and we cannot consistently with fidelity to him, be cold to encounter, or slow to resist, whatever is opposed to the cause he has in hand. How shall we ever adopt the Christian's triumph, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," without having known a conflict, or gained a victory? We may call ourselves Christians. We may hope to enjoy the benefits of the blessed name. But says our Lord, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Another consideration which should animate us in our Christian warfare, is, that it is promotive of our present happiness. If we trace the evils of life to their source, we shall find that they all, from the troubles which harrass whole nations, to the secret circumstances which distress individuals, proceed from one, or other of these things, which the Christian is required to overcome. Whence arise those mistakes in the paths, and that dissatisfaction with the aspect of life, which are often the foundation of a misery that nothing can remove? Do they not proceed from that aversion to spiritual pursuits, which keeps men ignorant of Deity and the principles of his government, and unacquainted with the excellent things of his law? Whence arise our cares, our perplexities, our disappointments, and chagrins? Do they not proceed from affections too fondly occupied with the things of the world? As it respects our actual necessities,

"Man wants but little, nor that little long."

But by creating artificial desires and expectations, by yielding to the influence of ambition, pride and vanity, we expose

ourselves to endless toils, and innumerable vexations. He who follows the world in its vain allurements, must in the end find, that he has followed an empty, capricious, transient shadow, seemingly real, but always delusive in the grasp. Whence arise those feelings, which disturb the even quiet of the soul; those sensations of langor and compunction, which are incompatible with positive felicity; those gnawings of remorse, which consume the vitals of peace; and that debility of soul and body, which is misery, while life lasts and hastens death? Do not all these sources of unhappiness proceed from ungoverned passions, or indulged lusts? Ask the angry man, what has been the spring of his most frequent sorrow? He will tell you the reflections of his mind, when he has contemplated cooly the ravages of his passion. Look at the man, who has given loose to all his desires, and indulged himself intemperately in sensual pleasures. He need not tell you, for you will quickly discern, that the fruit of his folly, is misery and shame. Whence arise those immoderate griefs, which acknowledge no joy; and fretting under every application, scarcely yield to the all-healing hand of time? Do they not proceed from hearts unbowed to the will of heaven; untaught to bear with patience the troubles and vexations which cannot be avoided? Now these various sources of our misery, are the very sources of opposition to our Christian progress. Religion requires us to overcome nothing, which is not as much the foe of our temporal happiness, as of our virtue and future hopes. Besides, there is a delight in the very act of conquest, which abundantly recompenses the arduousness of the conflict. The finest sensations of felicity, are those of virtue triumphant. They gratify the only worthy pride; they please the noblest desires of nature. The possessor of the most perfect satisfaction, is undoubtedly he, who at the bar of conscience, contemplating the follies of the world, the allurements of vice, the vexations of life, can say, through grace, I have overcome them all.

Again. We should be animated in this warfare, by the great and glorious examples which are in our view. What

can be more encouraging than to know, that others have engaged in the same conflict with ourselves, and have come off victorious? And who are these, that have been before us in this course, and are standing triumphant at the goal? They are the friends of God, the worthies of our race. We are not alone in this warfare. It has been the cause of the good in every age. Think of the faith of Abraham, of the righteousness of Noah, of the purity of Joseph, of the patience of Job, of the hardihood of Paul, of the heavenly mildness of St. John. Think of Moses, and Samuel, of David, and Elijah, of Daniel, and of all the prophets. Observe the greatness of their character, the loveliness of their virtues, and the success of their perseverance. Through difficulties as great as we can encounter, they have been conquerors, and obtained the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. Who would not be of their glorious company? What laurels so enviable, as those they won! Who that contrasts them with the motley children of the world, would not prefer, before all others, the path they have chosen, and persevere in it, till with them, he "inherits the promises?" But above all these, "look unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith;" who combining in himself all their trials and all their virtues, "tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin," "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Contemplating this host of worthies, with the Son of God at their head, the Christian may well deem his cause a happy and an honorable one, and gather fresh vigor from their success. For this, the Spirit of the Most High, hath preserved their memories, and recorded their histories, that we should take courage from their examples, and count it a felicity to be in the same field, contending for the same interests with "the Church of the first born."

Another consideration to animate us in our warfare, may be drawn from the assistance which is offered us by the Spirit of God. We are liable to be disheartened by the sense of our feebleness, and the greatness of our work. To conquer propensities born in us; to subdue our wills and affections to the mysterious decrees of heaven; to withstand the solicita-

tions of the world, which come under forms so fascinating, and have so many advocates within us, amidst the difficulties and darkness of this perplexed life; to preserve our faith unmoved, yea, without murmuring or repining to bear its amazing troubles; these are arduous duties; and if we were left to ourselves, they justly might dismay us. With the apostle, we might well exclaim, "who is sufficient for these things?" But difficulties are greater or less, according to the means of surmounting them. The Spirit of God, we may readily conceive, is adequate to any difficulty. His power, however imperceptibly operating upon us, may support us in every danger, and carry us through every trial of life.

Now this Spirit is the Christian's perpetual ally. In his warfare, he has always this Almighty aid. If he be weak, his God is strong. Greater is the power that is with him, than all the powers which can be against him. Add to this, the Saviour's constant intercession with the Father; and the Father's engagement, that if we are faithful to ourselves, we shall not be brought into trials greater than we are able to bear. The assurance of these, joined to a consciousness of his own faith and love, filled St. Paul with an animating persuasion, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, should be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I would adduce another motive to animate us in our Christian course, from the recollection of those who are witnesses of it. I speak not of the world, nor of the visible Church, which may profit, or be injured by our example. There are higher parties to the scene. We are not merely a spectacle unto men, but unto heavenly powers. What spirits, or how many walk, unseen amongst us, taking notice of our conduct, we are unable to ascertain. But of this we are assured, that God and his angels are spectators of our probation. I say the angels, "for are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation?" The

heavenly host, we are told, encamp around the just; and when the weight of woe, to which our Lord had humbly submitted himself, was becoming too heavy for his human nature to sustain, one of their exalted number was sent to strengthen him. Nor are they uninterested in the scene they behold. To them, we are taught, "is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God;" and the success of one penitent, gives them new joy, in their high state of glory. Besides these august beings, the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, observes the warfare between good and evil in this sublunary world. From his lofty throne, he is intent upon our ways. He espouses the interests of the good, and is himself the judge of our fidelity. We are wont to be influenced by the presence of the great. The learned dispute more acutely, and the contending strive more manfully, when august personages are witnesses of the contest. If then the holy angels are spectators of our warfare, who would not so strive as to be crowned? If God be umpire, what shame, as well as loss, to be overcome!

Which leads me to the last consideration I shall mention, as calculated to animate us in our Christian course; which is, the infinite and eternal weight of glory, which is reserved for those who shall be victorious. In the ancient games, to what self-denial and severe conflict did not the parties submit, that they might win the prize placed at the goal; a laurel, or a parsley crown? And to what toils and hardships, do we not devote ourselves, to gain the goods and honors of this perishable world! But what are these, compared with that crown of glory which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for the faithful? The possession of this, is expressed in my text, by inheriting all things. And truly, all that can exalt, all that can satisfy, all that can delight, must be their portion, who shall have an eternal abode assigned them, in the mansions of the Almighty's glory. But to secure this inheritance to ourselves, we must be *faithful unto death*, we must overcome. God's promises are conditional. They are made to those, who will abide in Christ. Should others be admitted into his holy city,

they would only defile it, without being capable of enjoying its pleasures. His wisdom and goodness, therefore, have united with his justice, in decreeing, that into it, the fearful, and unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and unclean, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall never enter. In the Christian, as well as in the heathen race, no man is crowned, except he strive lawfully. And the crown reserved in heaven for the victorious, will be an infinite recompense for all that they may be called to do and suffer. It is true, they may have to resist many fascinating allurements, and to forego many enticing joys. But what are the vain pleasures of this fleeting world, when weighed in the balance with the pleasures of heaven, with the interests of eternity! It is true, they may be called in their conflict, to cut off their foot or their hand that offends them, and to cast it from them. But is it not unspeakably better, to "enter into life, halt, or maimed, than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into hell-fire?" There is no sacrifice to duty we can be required to make, for which there is not provided an answerable reward. For all the painful preparations, the self-denials, and the arduous conflicts, which the Christian may endure in adhering to the banners of his Lord, he will receive an infinitely exceeding recompense in that state of bliss prepared for the faithful, in the regions of immortality and glory. Hearken to a declaration of the Son of God; and if any thing can animate you in the warfare of your present probation, you will find it in his impressive words—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father, on his throne."

It remains, that some rules be recommended, which may render the Christian warfare easy and successful.

In the first place, it will promote our comfort in the conflict, to ponder often the motives and considerations, by which we are to be animated. In this, as in every warfare, zeal is necessary both to ease and success; not that unenlightened tumultuous zeal, which depends upon the animal spirits, and is productive only of confusion; but that rational, steady zeal,

which springs from a consciousness of the importance of the cause, and engages the affections to co-operate with the mind. Such a zeal is necessary, if we would make any progress in the Christian course. Without it, we shall be sluggish and unsteady, often beguiled with the stratagem of the enemy, and led into a remissness which may endanger the victory. We should then frequently recollect our interest and our vows; the tendency of our duty to promote our temporal happiness; the great and glorious examples which are set before us; the promises of Almighty God to aid our exertions; the high and august beings, who are witnesses of our behavior; and the amazing good, even eternal life, which we have at stake. If these considerations are lost in the bustle of business, or amusements of the world, we shall perform our warfare with toil, and doubtful success. But if they be often and soberly recollected, they will inspire us with an ardent and steady zeal, which will as powerfully diminish the obstacles in our way, as the sun drinketh up the dew.

Another rule, for rendering our warfare easy and successful, is to be well, and properly armed. We must put on the Christian's strength and defence. This is the whole armor of God; the suit complete, in which his ancient saints fought and were conquerors: and which is provided in his armory for every soldier of Jesus Christ. It is so happily described by the pen of an inspired apostle, that I forbear to use any other words. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked: and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Clad in this armor, what can annoy us? Its defensive part is impenetrable; and that which is for active operation is irresistible. The shield of faith, is itself a panoply. To preserve it unloosened through our own heedlessness, and unimpaired by the evils and discouragements of life, is the highest point of christian skill. It will

many ways be endangered, by the misgivings of our own minds, by the obscurity of the ways of Providence, by invisible adversaries, and by the artifices or examples of evil men. But the ease and success of our warfare, do essentially depend upon the preservation of this shield of faith. Confident in the truth of God, let nothing wrest it from you. For "this is the victory, which overcometh the world, even our faith." And again, "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

Further, when we are possessed of zeal springing from a sense of the magnitude of the cause, and have put on the whole armor of God, it will much promote the facility of our warfare to be disencumbered of as much as may be with foreign concerns. "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." We cannot make much progress in the Christian life, with our eyes upon heaven, and our hearts upon this present world. When the attention is distracted, it accomplishes nothing. There are indeed many temporal things, upon which the condition of our nature obliges us to bestow our care; there are duties of society, and domestic affairs, which we cannot innocently neglect; and charity must allow, that some relaxations are necessary for the feebleness of nature. But whatever is beyond those, all factitious pleasures, all vain pursuits, are incumbrances in the Christian warfare. They retard our progress; they weaken our force; they embolden the foe. When men are careful and troubled about many things, they seldom prosecute effectually "the one thing needful." It is with a single eye to the service of God, that our duty will be most easily and successfully performed. Hence the apostle exhorts his Hebrew converts, to "lay aside every weight," not to encumber themselves with foreign concerns, but be intent on the race that was set before them.

Again, it will greatly facilitate our Christian course, to make ourselves acquainted with our weaknesses, and be vigilant of the motion of our foes. All men are subject to imperfections. Most men have their particular frailties. They

are more liable to some passions and vices, than to others. In these vulnerable parts, it will be found by observation they are generally assailed. Temptation comes where we are weakest; and the inroads which it thus makes upon virtue, have rendered the warfare of many a good man doubly arduous, by making work for difficult and bitter repentance. Wherever we are weak, centinels should be placed, to repel the first approaches of temptation, and give us the alarm. Had David done this, his glory might not have been tarnished with adultery. Had it been done by Judas, he might not have sold his Lord. The prophet and apostle alike fell, by an attack where they were weakest, and had not properly fortified themselves. It is a great part of the Christian's wisdom, to have his eye upon his foe; and wherever he discovers himself most liable to be assaulted, there to place his vigilant and powerful forces. We must not only lay aside every weight, but also the sin which doth so easily beset us; if we would strive successfully under the banners of the Redeemer.

And here, it may be added, that to yield in any instance to vice, will increase the difficulty of our spiritual life. It is much easier to maintain the ground you hold, than to recover it when it is lost. The man who yields to temptation, then rallies his powers, then tampers, and then yields again, determined to go only to a certain point, and then return, and rally his virtue anew, will make of the Christian warfare a laborious and hazardous work. He will at best make but a slow and dishonorable progress, and in an evil hour may be fatally undone. Would you have your Christian course easy and safe? Never listen, never yield to its enemies. Habit is ease, perseverance is safety. But when you have suffered yourselves to be diverted from your object, and the course of duty has been interrupted, to regain integrity and persevere, will be found more difficult than had been imagined.

Once more; to the success of the Christian, as of every other warfare, the assistance and blessing of the Most High, is indispensibly necessary. Without the Almighty, we can do nothing. His Holy Spirit is a most powerful agent in ren-

dering our "yoke easy, and our burthen light." It is through his secret influences, that we are made strong in the fight of faith, and may be invincible. Hence arises the necessity of prayer, which is a natural and appointed mean of obtaining this precious blessing. And surely, they who will neglect this honorable duty, do not deserve and cannot expect that assistance, which when faithfully performed it never fails to procure. Prayer is in itself peculiarly adapted to qualify us for every conflict. It purifies and exalts our affections. It strengthens our holy resolutions. We are emboldened, by that indescribable complacency, which is always diffused through the bosoms of those, who have faithfully communed with the Father of their spirits. But it is chiefly and incalculably valuable in the Christian warfare; in that it brings down the assistance and blessing of heaven, through which we cannot fail to overcome. Possessed of these, "though an host should encamp against us, our heart need not fear;" yea, though our flesh and nature failed, in these we might be confident. Let it then be esteemed an important rule for rendering our warfare easy and successful, to present ourselves often before the throne of the Eternal, that by communion with God, we may have our affections spiritualized, and obtain his aid and sovereign blessing.

It remains to be added, lastly, that we should avail ourselves of all the means, which have been specially appointed for our furtherance in the Christian life. Among these, I reckon a constant and devout attendance on the sanctuary; when the services which are offered, and the word which is preached, may beget or confirm in us a knowledge and love of divine things. Among these may be ranked communion with the head and members of the Church, in which we may take courage, from the character of our associates, and from the name and might of our glorious leader. Among these, may be placed a faithful attention to the precepts and instructions concerning our warfare, which are contained in the Holy Scriptures. But chief among these, is the holy eucharist, the supper of our Lord. To this, should every soldier of the

Redeemer resort. Here should he seek for spiritual strength. In this sacrament, he will find the pardon of his sins, the pledges of his master's love, and the sure promise of immortality. His soul will he strengthened and refreshed for its spiritual conflicts, by the body and blood of Christ, as his body is by the bread and wine. It was doubtless with a view to our necessities, that the blessed Redeemer in the same night in which he was betrayed, instituted this holy sacrament; and to it should every one of his disciples come, for that spiritual strength, which no man knoweth save him who receiveth it.

Indeed the only way in which we can with any degree of joyful expectation hope to overcome, is to avail ourselves of those channels of grace which God hath set open; and be found walking in his commandments and ordinances blameless.

Remembering the declaration of his mouth, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," be induced to conquer your aversion to spiritual truths, to subdue the body of sin within you, to vanquish the temptations and allurements of the world, and to rise above the troubles and perplexities of life. So shall you be qualified to fasten your hopes upon the good things of the world to come; and in that solemn hour, when the strong men bow themselves, and the hearts of the stoutest are appalled, be able to adopt the peaceful requiem of the apostle, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

SERMON XIII.

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THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE GOSPEL.*

1 CORINTHIANS, II, 1, 2.

AND I, BRETHREN, WHEN I CAME TO YOU, CAME NOT WITH EXCELLENCY OF SPEECH, OR OF WISDOM, DECLARING UNTO YOU THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANY THING AMONG YOU, SAVE JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

Such was the decision of St. Paul, when he had it in his power, in a city of high literary renown, to refute and remove the current prejudices against the unlettered preachers of christianity, by the exhibitions of his own commanding and overpowering eloquence. He, who, by nature and education, might have entered into a successful competition with the distinguished orators of Greece, and whose mind, while dwelling upon the absorbing topics of man's redemption and salvation, could have easily kindled the fire of enthusiasm, which warms into ardor and action the souls of a populace, discarded that excellency of speech and of man's wisdom, which would have elevated him, in such circumstances, to an honorable pre-eminence.

Though the people whom he addressed, had been familiar with displays of oratorical skill, such, as before that age, the world had seldom heard or felt, he yet had it in his power to enhance and perpetuate the enchantment it creates. He could have held them spell-bound, by an eloquence, with which, the plausible, insinuating, persuasive address of

* This discourse was delivered in St. Paul's Church, Boston, before the Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts, and is now first published in the "Pulpit," at the request of many who heard it.

Æschines, or the bold, rapid vehemence of Demosthenes alone, could have worthily been brought into comparison. Indeed had all the forensic talents of the Greek states been marshalled against him, he could have carried away the palm of victory in such an intellectual contest. Endowments of nature, which made him a chosen vessel of God, instruction at the feet of Gamaliel, and companionship and sympathy with the devoted followers of the crucified Saviour, had done for him more than the school of Gorgias, at Athens,—or the teachings of Isæus, which so successfully cultivated and developed the maturing genius, and elaborated the education of Grecian orators, could accomplish for them.

Yet, Brethren, with all these advantages, of unrivalled reasoning powers, and of intellectual superiority, which were sufficient to spread the fame of his writings every where and distinguish them as monuments of unexampled eloquence and logical demonstration to the end of time; in the midst of a city, where Christ crucified, was literally, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks but foolishness, this holy minister of God discarded every thing but gospel truth *in its pristine, unadorned simplicity*, and relied upon the positive efficacy and inherent energy of *that* alone, for success in his ministry and in the conversion of souls. This too, was the resolute conduct of his labors among a people, whose extraordinary intellectual character and refinement have been the proud boast of the world.

What more plain and impressive lesson is to be deduced from this illustrious example and noble declaration, than that *the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, in the hands of a faithful, prudent and enlightened ministry, relying on the grace and Spirit of God, following its dictates, and diligently fulfilling their appropriate duties, is sufficient for the conversion and salvation of men?*

If the ministers of our most holy religion, when they assume the sacerdotal habit, and engage in their duties, as preachers of righteousness, determine not to know any thing, among those to whom they are sent, but Jesus Christ and him crucified,

can it be an unwarrantable faith, or a presumptuous reliance on the divine agency, if they *believe*, and *act* confidently *on the belief*, that in this way, they will most acceptably fulfil the ministry, they have received of the Lord Jesus? Can they more effectively in any other way, contribute to the success of the gospel and the conversion of men's souls? If, Brethren, gospel-truth, in the force and plainness of gospel-simplicity, by virtue of the authority of its divine origin, and the power of its application to the condition of all men, be not a sufficient guaranty to ensure its success in the world, then, the ministers of God's word may as well lay their sacred vestments aside, and resign in despair the office with which they have been honored. For the testimony of God declared or preached, otherwise than on its divine authority, or recommended to favor, by excellency of speech or man's wisdom alone, must prove unavailing. This is the word of the Lord, in relation to it, and it sufficiently sustains such a sentiment. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." And the reason of this is very plain, "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Is there not then an interesting enquiry to be made whether our calculations of the success of those ministrations, in which the messengers of divine truth are engaged, are not too often predicated upon excellency of speech and of man's wisdom, rather than on the divine influence, which, the Bible teaches, is essential to their efficacy? and whether a careful view of the economy of our holy religion will not teach us, that too much reliance, placed on literary and philosophical attainments, and the artificial modes of their popular exhibition, which are often in contradiction to its simplicity and spirit, has an undeviating tendency to neutralize its influence. Can its ministers, when they give themselves to the work of the Lord, and go into the world on their divine mission, to persuade men to repentance and amendment of life, mark out for themselves a better course of action than that, which this determination of St. Paul describes? If they resolve not to

know any thing among mankind, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, is it not manifest that the people must hear and know more of the essential doctrines of the Gospel, than from a different line of conduct, on the part of its ministers, they would receive?

Now, Brethren, the first position, which, in prosecuting this enquiry, we feel it our duty to take, is, that *the Bible is the word of God, and a miraculous revelation, which He has made to mankind.* If this position be questionable, then is "our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." To proceed on any other supposition, is unwarrantable, when the demonstration, by which this truth has been accompanied, is considered; and would be an abandonment of the reason and faith, established and sustained by the consent and convictions of ninety-nine-hundreths, of all the men of learning, and talents, of moral and intellectual superiority, which the christianized world has ever known. On the present occasion, especially, should this first position, be maintained with force and power, because it is the Bible, and that *alone*, which teaches, of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

If then the Bible have this authoritative sanction, we *must* insist, that from its plain, simple precepts and declarations, and its inflexible requirements in order to salvation, there is for men neither evasion nor appeal.

It is this sacred volume, too, which teaches of human apostacy, and of the only way of recovery from its awful consequences. "For there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus Christ. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour." (for this very reason,) "for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins."

The lost and ruined condition of the world then, without a Saviour, and of every soul of apostate man that is in it, should be the first topic of our preaching, and the last upon which we should dwell. This doctrine is undeniably implied in the crucifixion of a being, of the dignity and holiness of Jesus Christ. It must be manifest when men reflect on the purport

of sacrifices under the Mosaic dispensation, and on the known existence of sacrifices, in order to propitiate the Deity in every nation on the habitable globe, from the remotest periods of their history, that some serious impediment to an amicable intercourse with the Creator of men, was felt or understood. If to the shedding of the blood of an innocent animal, invariably there were imputed pardon and reconciliation, it must be decisive proof, that repentance, by the universal consent of mankind, was, of itself, insufficient to produce such a result; and that "without shedding of blood there was no remission."

This truth, a divine revelation must originally have taught mankind; for from no other source could a sentiment, which violates the dictates of nature, have been derived. And if a subsequent revelation joins its voice, to all that pre-existing facts suggest, in a case, so deeply interesting to the human mind, then, when the sacrifice rises in dignity, grandeur and importance to an *infinite worth*, and we admit that the offering of himself, for the sins of the world, on the part of One, "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God," could not have been permitted, unless in the divine mind, it had been deemed necessary, the existence of an universal and deplorable apostacy and ruin, is the only legitimate inference deducible from such extraordinary premises.

It is on this undeniable conclusion, supported by almost every page of the Bible, that the preaching of St. Paul was based. "The sentence of death reigned fromAdam to Moses," he asserts, "even over THEM, that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them and rose again."—"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

It is, brethren, the vast importance of this doctrine, of Christ crucified, to every intelligent and rational being on the face of the earth, which renders so interesting, *this* theme of apostolical preaching, and for this reason, should the minis-

ters of Christ's religion determine not to know any thing among those, to whom they are sent, than Jesus Christ, and him crucified: or, in other words, should determine to keep this object ever in view, and to impress on their own, and other men's souls, a sense of their apostate condition by nature, and their hopes through grace.

If there had been no divine law, there could have been no transgression. If there had been no original transgression, by which the whole posterity of man became alienated, and at war with God, there would have been no need of sacrifices, as a means of propitiation and reconciliation. If man had remained pure and holy as he came from the hands of his creator, the divine favor and presence would not have been withdrawn from him; he would not have been banished from the scene of primeval happiness, nor denied the privileges of intercourse with God, except through a mediatorial sacrifice.

But it was fit, that a proof should be given of his obedience, in order that the sovereignty of God should be acknowledged and reverenced: that the rightful proprietorship and supremacy of the Creator over the creature, which his own hands had formed, might be recognised; and that the inequality between an infinite and finite intelligence should be felt. Every dictate of reason makes us feel the fitness of that vindication of the divine sovereignty, which the giving of a law implies; and had not obedience been *possible*, surely, my brethren, that justice, which every dispensation to the world so fully and so impressively convinces us is inherent in the divine character, could not have permitted the consequences of sin, to the latest of man's posterity, to have been entailed on mankind.

The atonement of Christ, then, which, the promise respecting the seed of the woman implied, is, above all the most important, consolatory and interesting topic involved in our declaration of "the testimony of God."

If it pleased the Father, that in his Son, who is "the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature," by whom "were all things created that are in heaven and in earth,") "should all fulness dwell;" who,

having made our peace by the blood of his cross, "by him, to reconcile all things unto himself," "whether they be things in earth or things in heaven;" then, Brethren, Jesus Christ and him crucified, *must* be set forth; in all our preaching, as the sinner's only hope.

And such a theme needs not "excellency of speech" nor the enticing words of man's wisdom, to render it impressive. This is Gospel truth in its simplicity; that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; Christ the first fruits; afterwards *they that are Christ's*, remember this qualification, they that are Christ's, at his coming;" that is, they that have been born again, who are his by a believing faith and a repentant, obedient life: That "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" That "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;" that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" that unless "a man be born of water and of the spirit," of God, "he cannot enter the kingdom of God:" That "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" and that "except ye eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life, no spiritual life, in you. These, Brethren, and like declarations of holy writ, need not labored discussion for proof, when they are founded wholly and firmly upon a divine declaration. Proof can do little good, when the heart rejects what God reveals.

So too in relation to the way of acceptance with God. "I" says the Saviour, "am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the father but by me, neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." To assertions like these, Brethren, is it needful to apply any thing like demonstration, when the very arguments, which must be employed in their support, are less impressive, self evident, and convincing than the simple authority upon which they stand? When the mind

will not receive and regard what God has declared as a necessary requirement and an appointed method of salvation, little will reasoning, or excellency of speech, or man's wisdom avail.

As all men are conceived and born in sin, since a sinful moral nature, like hereditary constitutional propensities to disease, may be transmitted down through successive generations of mankind; as the word of God has declared that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually; that children are transgressors from the womb, and that without holiness no man can see the Lord; it must be true, that no one can cherish any scriptural hope of salvation, unless the spirit of God, work in the children of disobedience, and the mercy of God impart to men, a new heart and a new spirit; and take away the stony heart out of their flesh, so that they may walk in his statutes and keep his ordinances and do them, that they may be his people and he be their reconciled God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh," that corrupt nature which is our inheritance, still produces the works that are congenial to a sinful nature. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit; the operation of God's spirit on the heart, fills it with aspirations for spiritual and heavenly things, and imparts to the soul a perception of their beauty and value. Should we then marvel that we *must* be born again; that a work of grace and mercy, through the goodness of God, who gives his Holy Spirit to them who perseveringly and scripturally ask him, must be wrought by its divine agency, before the soul takes its everlasting flight to another world, before we can enter the kingdom of heaven!

And, Brethren, in what connection, does this doctrine stand with Jesus Christ and him crucified? The Holy Ghost the comforter, did not descend upon the earth until the great atoning sacrifice for sin had been made; until the Saviour of the world had "led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," and it was Christ that sent him. It was this that he promised to send to his faithful disciples, that it might "*bring all things*

to their remembrance whatsoever he had told them," and thus give its legitimate influence to divine truth on the heart. It was this which was truly and emphatically the spirit of God and of Christ, for Christ said "all that the Father hath are mine," influencing the heart and conduct in the works of repentance, faith and obedience, and which is implied in the declarations, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his,—if any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.

It was this Holy Spirit which, on the day of Pentecost so miraculously wrought for the salvation of souls, and is now the agent of conversion, renewing the sinner in the spirit of his mind, so that he can discover what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and sealing him unto the day of redemption. And it is this spiritual power, when good thoughts come into the mind, and holy resolutions are active in the heart, which men are so impressively warned not to resist nor grieve.

The work of repentance, is essentially connected with Jesus Christ and him crucified. "Whom the Jews slew and hanged on a tree, *him* hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for this very reason, *to give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Now repentance is a change of heart, producing a corresponding change of conduct, and this work is produced in men by Jesus Christ, through the agency of his blessed spirit, which convinces us of sin, and bringeth forth in the soul by its purifying and sanctifying influence, the fruits of obedience and holiness.

These then, Brethren, are some of the essential doctrines of the Gospel, and they are so closely interwoven into the Christian system, that it is impossible to tear them away without rending and marring that veil which the Deity is pleased to interpose between himself and the apostate family of man. They define the terms of his intercourse with his Maker, and are the appointed laws, by which his mercy and favour are to be obtained.

They are impressively exhibited in Jesus Christ and him

crucified, and a determination, on the part of God's ministers to know him, and him alone; to keep him, and him only, constantly in view, while declaring the testimony of God, and fulfilling the commission upon which they are sent, is their imperative duty and the most probable means of its successful execution. Less than this, they can scarcely do, while taking heed to the ministry they have received in the Lord, and acting as the faithful servants of him by whom they have been delegated. And when these doctrines have been faithfully delivered and urged upon the attention of men, *from the high authority, whence they proceed;* when they have been exhibited as "*the testimony of God*" to a guilty world; it has been by *his* spirit alone, that they have been rendered efficacious, in the conversion and salvation of souls. For Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase.

It has been gospel truth, preached in its simplicity, plainness and unreserved application to the wants and weakness of our nature; set forth, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, by ministers, who have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that they might know the things that are freely given us of God; that has been mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

And when, Brethren, you look to the *motive* of this course, on the part of those who minister to you in holy things; which is that they may take heed to themselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, must it not approve itself to every man's conscience and find a sufficient sanction in every reflecting mind.

Take for a moment a prospective view of a scene, which perhaps at no distant time may be seen, when a minister of Jesus Christ, and that flock, over whom, divinely commis-

sioned, he has been honorably placed, shall be assembled at the bar of God. They are about to hold their first intercourse together in the other world, while each, in trembling anxiety, or fell despair, awaits the irreversible sentence of their Judge. Ere the awful award of "depart ye accursed into everlasting fire" is thundered from the Almighty's throne, in a voice which must shake the universe to its foundations, and appal the stoutest of careless unbelieving souls, suppose a pause to ensue, in which, the hopes of the converted, the doubts of the faithless, and the anguish of the sinner at this awful hour find utterance. Upon whom will the self-condemned impenitent, first cast his piercing look, and pour forth the heart rending accents of his agony and despair? Must it not be on him, if there be such a one, to whose unfaithful ministry, he may attribute, all the anguish of an unrenewed and guilty soul, and all the torments of hell? May he not exclaim in the most pathetic tones, "Me he never told of my natural apostacy and ruin:—To me he never faithfully exhibited the only way of salvation, and pointed out with interest and feeling, the great atoning sacrifice, that was made for the sins of the world:—Me he never warned to flee from the wrath to come and seek conversion in Christ Jesus:—Me he never persuaded that I must be born again and be reconciled to God, and through Christ, find joy and peace in believing, and forgiveness with my judge:—Me he never impressively or feelingly exhorted to repentance, as if it was essential to my salvation, and thus recorded in the word of God:—To me he never spoke of the Holy Spirit, by whose work on my soul, I might have been sealed unto the day of redemption, against the horrors of this awful hour:—Me he never entreated to come to Christ, and by admission into his church, by baptism and a devout reception of the Lord's supper, have been placed in circumstances auspicious for my salvation:—Me he never exhorted to give myself up, in a perpetual covenant to God, that I might through faith, repentance and obedience, have sought in the atonement and blood of Christ, and in the work of the spirit, for sanctification and redemption.

And, Brethren, do ministers of Christ shudder when they think of their responsibility, and tremble at the idea of the possibility of such a recrimination at that awful hour of judgement? Oh! then, blame not their faithfulness; reproach not the plainness and simplicity of their speech; object not to *their* boldness, who set before you *the testimony of God*, and determine, in all their intercourse among you, to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And to you, Brethren of the ministry, may I not say, that we *must* now do our duty, in the *fear of God*. The time is short for us to perform the work which is in our hands, and to fulfil the ministry that we have received of the Lord Jesus. Let us then be faithful, let us set forth gospel truth, in its simplicity, pointedness and uncompromising strictness towards the wilfully disobedient, and its alluring tenderness and compassion towards the anxious enquirer after the way of life. Let us be diligent, persevering and prayerful; prudent; *prudent* in our intercourses with men, but *fearless* in the delivery of our message, let us give no cause for them to say that we magnify our office, that we may exalt ourselves; or that we are otherwise their servants, than for their own and Christ's sake. Let us endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and after the fulfilment of a faithful ministry, let us rely only, and wait patiently, on God, for his blessing.

If ever we are to be useful to the Church and to the souls of men it must be, ere age steals from our bodies all their elastic vigor, and with its concomitant infirmities clouds and enervates the mind. Oh, then, let us gird up our loins to engage with renovated ardour, in the duties of that highand holy enlistment, to which, our ministerial vows have sealed us, for the term of our lives. Let us seek for grace to continue steadfast, unwavering and persevering, unto the end. Let us be faithful unto death; and then our ministry, through weakness, imperfect, and through sinfulness, unworthy, may not go unrewarded, and the "heed" we have given to it rather than its success, be the evidence of our recognition, and acquittal, at the hands of God.

SERMON XIV.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM WITHINGTON. A. M.
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THE REWARD SOUGHT, OBTAINED.

MATTHEW VI. 16.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD.

Such is the thrice repeated declaration of our Lord respecting the religious services of the hypocrites, that is, the Pharisees. He applies it to their alms, to their prayers, and to their fastings. Their alms are given at the sound of a trumpet, for the collecting of beggars in the streets. For their prayers—not their social devotions, but such as they offer each for himself—the most conspicuous station is taken. When they fast, the face is disfigured with ashes, and the affectations of every trait of wo.

In all this, one end is the real object of concern—to wit, to pass in the world as uncommonly devoted to the service of God. Unworthy and abominable as are the means employed, they shall not be altogether in vain. They shall obtain—just the object sought, just the reward in heart desired. They seek the reputation of eminent sanctity; and they have it. They pass among men for the undoubted favorites of heaven, and share abundantly the consequent worldly advantages. But the approbation of God—it enters into their reward, just as much as regard for him does into their motives of action; that is, nothing at all. As this is not the reward they seek, so neither is it obtained.

At first sight we might regard the hypocrisy here exposed, as too gross, too obviously aiming to be seen of men, to obtain its end. It might seem, as if a little more shunning of obser-

vation ought to have been affected, more surely to gain the reputation of piety. But this would be to overlook the feelings and manners of the times. Such downright ostentation in religion was not then in any degree disreputable, as it would be among us. They who sought reputation for sanctity, did it with too steady an aim—too acute singleness of view, to fail by overdoing.

Let us beware, lest we value ourselves too highly, because the tendency of the times does not tempt us to a violation of Christian modesty so outrageous: because we know, that for literally sounding a trumpet in the streets for collecting beggars to receive our charities, for praying in the public gaze, for affected mortification in fasting, we should only be scorned and hissed at; such being no longer suitable means to obtain glory of men. We may ridicule, or pity, all this, and yet be nothing the nearer to the simplicity of Christian principle. Doubtless mankind have not so changed their nature, but that much of all this still exists, only less obvious to us, because so adapted to our habits of thinking and acting. Could we see all the regard to what man thinks, which alloys the most unpretending charity—all that mingles with professions of unworthiness really felt—we might think the times less changed in reality, than in appearance. And if the time shall ever come, when the kingdom of God shall singly rule the hearts of his people, pre-eminently above its present influence, as much as we look for the increase of its subjects: when the men of that day look back on the operations of this, without the gift of looking further than to the outward appearance; I know not, with what sentiments they will contemplate the bustling array, and much that enters into the benevolent operations, which we regard as the peculiar glory of our age. I know not, whether they will find most to pity, or to approve. Perhaps in that day the question may be asked, When the attempt to send the gospel to every creature was revived, why did the dispensers of the public charities publish to the world the names and benefactions of all who contributed a dollar or two to the undertaking? Could it be taken as any

thing else than a satire on their vanity? And charity may answer, the imperious necessity of freely giving what had been so freely received, without suffering the right hand to inquire into the doings of the left, was then so little understood, that the purest benevolence could not be sustained in its undertakings, without seeming to call in the aid of some very inferior principles of action.

Again, when we read, that the ancient hypocrites did all to be seen of men, to have glory of them, we are not to suppose, that they deliberately proposed to themselves this end, with that open, absolute singleness of purpose, with which you avowedly pursue a lawful temporal object, by the means which providence dictates. We are not to suppose, they thought to themselves, we will make the profession of great zeal for God, and mortification to the world, the means of attracting admiration, and securing our worldly interest. No, we may be assured, they never represented to their own consciences their prime object to be other, than to serve the Lord devotedly. But who that admits other considerations once to sway in his religious professions, shall afterwards disentangle his motives, even to his own inspection? Let us beware, lest we value ourselves too highly, because we have never honestly professed to ourselves, that we would make the law of God the mask to cover our own devices.

Now if you will really make religion a machine to acquire glory among men, you will of course have discernment enough to perceive, wherein you must vary your conduct from that of your predecessors of old. And as men have learned to differ widely in their estimation of all that relates to religion, that which is highly esteemed among one class, being an abomination with another; it may be well to lay your account with seeking the esteem of only a part.

Suppose then, you desire to be noted as being strictly pious, strenuous for the religion of your fathers, opposed to innovations in religious belief, boldly penetrating the hollowness of professedly improved modes of thinking and liberalized ideas. Of course you must yield the good esteem of one part of the community, the better to secure that of the other.

But this very necessity renders success on the field still open more certain: and this may be yet wide enough for your satisfaction. It is at all times little, that the faithful can know of their fellows. They must judge and act according to the profession, and the merest surface of the conduct. But when the principles once held in common are abandoned by numbers, there is naturally a disposition to think favorably of such as still hold fast. Party spirit may contribute of its influence, to create a favorable opinion toward those, who hold the accepted doctrines and practices.

If then such is the reward, that you mainly seek, you may pretty safely calculate on having it. I would not indeed engage, that you shall never so far betray the real motives of your conduct, as to create painful apprehensions in the more discerning of your associates. But the very qualities, which render them discerning to penetrate your covering, will render them averse from communicating their apprehensions. They will not think it incumbent on them narrowly to scrutinize your heart. They will not forget the charity that hopeth all things. They will not be uninfluenced by the motives, not to inspect too rigidly the ranks beset with so many temptations to desertion. The generality will cordially believe the good of you, which the discerning few cannot but hope. You will probably pass through life, as a fair candidate for eternity; be consoled in the hour of death, as just on the verge of your greatest happiness; and be commended afterwards, as among the happiest of the happy.

If in the mean time you are expected to make some contributions to religious charities, from which in another line of life you would be exempt; they need not exceed, perhaps not nearly equal, the sums, which you would be compelled to spend and which you would cheerfully spend, to support in any of its forms, the character of a mere man of the world.

You shall have your reward, and that not altogether worthless. It might pass for great, if this world were to bound our view. It will contribute much to your comfort here. It will comprise a friendly interest in your welfare, the more cordial and intense, because strait the way, and because it

is intended to reach beyond the bounds of time. If your station is lowly, you shall be rewarded by the comparative little importance attached by those, with whom are your religious sympathies, to these present distinctions of society. Or if you have domestics and dependants, you may expect a part of your reward in their good order, derived from the influence of your manner of exhibiting religion to them. For among all the improvements of these days, it has hardly yet been pretended, that any thing better than old-fashioned christianity has been devised to regulate this portion of the community.

If trials and troubles attend this your reward, the portion you are compelled to bear, will probably not exceed what would be incident to your lot, in any other course you might choose. Only be content with the reward you really seek, and which alone your conduct is competent to obtain, and expect no part of it, when you reach that world, which has not been first in your calculations.

Or, will you seek the praise of rising superior to the prejudices and bigotry of past ages—of laying hold on eternal truth, wherever found, or wherever rejected—of thinking liberally and charitably on the diversities of belief, which divide and embroil mankind? This too may be obtained at a very cheap rate. You need not investigate in the originals the scriptures, which you profess so highly to prize, and so independently to examine; studying the history of the times when they were written, the better to know, what sense they were then supposed to convey. You need not plod through the Greek and Latin fathers; to learn, how one opinion has grown out of another, and reject their authority, after learning from themselves, what they held, and how they held to it. You need not even be solicitous to acquire that critical and historical information, with which your vernacular tongue might furnish you. You need not exclude from your heart hard thoughts, and bitter suspicions, and supercilious contempt, of those who differ from you. Nay, you need not restrain your tongue from expressing all these, from charging upon them the worst possible motives. You have little else

to do, than to adopt a system, and a phraseology, which you can acquire at little cost of time or trouble, and to be very profuse in the application of the general undefined name of *christian*; and your end is obtained—you have your reward. You shall be hailed by those, from whom you seek such greeting, as being just what you profess to be. You shall have your reward, in being counted worthy to be numbered with some of the most enlightened and refined of society.

As to the satisfaction of real independence of thinking—of tracing out the various causes, which have formed the opinions of men at different times—of receiving or rejecting them, according to fixed rules of evidence, unbiassed by the love of the ancient or of the new—this is probably what you have no conception of, and will never miss.

Neither expect to enjoy the serenity of temper, which genuine charity affords. If you would indeed contend with the opponent of your opinions, with such friendly feelings, as if each were equally desirous of truth, as ready to be corrected by him, as to set him right; if you would not yield to feelings of triumph at your advantages over him, or of anger at his over you; if you would not indulge contempt towards the supposed errors of others; if you would know the satisfaction, not of thinking very favorably of the general condition of mankind in the gross, but of putting the best possible construction on the particular acts of individuals, which thwart your interest, or contradict your opinions; this is a prize not so cheaply won; perhaps one, for which you have no taste or inclination; perhaps you have more relish for censure and satire, than to appreciate it.

Or, will you make religion a foil, to set off the superior generosity and nobleness of your own nature, which can do without it in any of its forms? Will you seek the glory of being humane, noble-spirited, endowed with whatever good qualities religion can give, without the religious fears necessary to influence vulgar minds? Here too the reward, you aim at, is easily attained. You need not be careful to be a very rigid moralist. Practice a few showy popular virtues; and a belief of the good heart, from which they spring, will

cover a great many deficiencies in the rest of your conduct. Even the want of a uniformly consistent virtuous life, may give more prominence, and attract more admiration, to what virtues you do practice. You may find some governed in the main by religious motives, defective in some particulars; they may have for instance a tinge of covetousness: and you may contrive to bring your conduct into contrast with theirs in this particular, so as to set off your own to great advantage. You can find enough ready to give you the palm for your real or supposed superiority here. And in fact the generosity, which religion does not govern, needs cost a man's purse but very little. One dollar skilfully spent towards furnishing an entertainment for a company skilfully selected, shall go further towards establishing the character, than ten spent in the unostentatious relief of obscure poverty. So cheaply may this reward be obtained. Will you pursue it, as worthy of your serious intent?

Why stop to consider the probable success of him, who, without making *religion* a cloak for avarice (to doing which we are little tempted at this day) aims at wealth as the reward for making it the one object, in whose pursuit he is "all head to counsel, and all heart to act;" taking care, not to be quite a knave, nor yet quite coming up to the strictness of christian principle; and how generally he shall not fail of his end? Or him, who courts popular favor, ready to accommodate his principles to the changes of the times, submitting to involve his conduct in the intricate doublings, which political intrigue requires? As he seeks not, so neither needs he regret, the conscious loftiness of unbending integrity of a Cato. But with a tolerable share of sagacity, he may expect a due portion of the favor craved.

I hasten rather to mark one other course, where the reward is no less certain, nay established far surer, than either yet considered. Something singular—unforeseen—may wrest either of these from your grasp. Of such as these it is said with an emphasis, that the possessors *have* their reward; that is, have it already, have the whole of it, have it in this life, have the sum of what they ever shall enjoy. Now if instead

of these, you seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, whatever you fail of here, you *shall* have your reward.

When it is said, "Take heed lest ye do your alms before men, *to be seen of them;* otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven;" it is implied, as a thing well understood, that alms properly given—given from respect to God, and benevolence to his creatures, without regard to human applause, shall have their reward hereafter. What is here implied, is in many places of scripture plainly asserted. The abuse heretofore made of this doctrine in extolling the merit of charitable works, has inclined some in these latter times, to keep it almost or quite out of sight, lest they should detract from the free gift of salvation. We need not however guard the freeness of God's gifts more cautiously, than he has done himself. It is enough, if having done our utmost, we expect nothing but as the faithful fulfiling of a gratuitous promise, claiming to have rendered no profit, to have done only what was our duty to do, had no special reward been annexed.

The prayers of the hypocrites were another thing, for which they had their reward—had it precisely in the applause and favor, which they sought. So if hurt that the name of your Father is so often slighted and blasphemed among men, you pray, that *that* name in you may be hallowed, by the acknowledgement of his greatness and goodness, and your dependence; that the reign of truth and peace may pervade the dark places of the earth, and more supremely rule, where now established; that you may learn that hardest of lessons, to acquiesce in his will—his purposes for things throughout heaven and earth—though traversing your own, and laying your glory in the dust; as depending on him for the daily supply of common wants, though your stores may flow with the abundance, which the worldling attributes to his own skill and industry; asking the forgivness of your trespasses, and cherishing a forgiving spirit towards those affronts against yourself, which it is the pride of wordly honor to revenge; and pleading for protection and deliverance from the temptations, against which you feel your own virtue to be so incompetent, and your yielding to which to be so inexcusable; thus pray-

ing, you shall have your reward: have an earnest of it here, in the felt assurance, that he, to whose will you have bowed your own, is "oft most merciful, when most he seems to frown." You shall have its completion, when he who seeth in secret shall acknowledge and reward his people openly.

The hypocrites were rewarded according to their aim for their fasting. So if you find this to be a useful auxiliary of your prayers, and to the due subjection of your animal nature, and practice it with a single eye to this one object; you shall have your reward precisely in what you sincerely desire.

But how do we cheat ourselves through want of simplicity of purpose in religion! Mark, for instance the wily politician, not content with hazarding his soul to the perils of political strife, without making his religious party and his political party the same; pleading zeal for God, and the defence of the civil rights of men, together for the accomplishment of the same purposes. "O what a tangled web he weaves!" which who shall unravel? And how does he leave his name, a wonder for succeeding ages to conjecture, in what proportion ambition and fanaticism, hypocricy and sincerity, entered into the most singular compound!

How hardly do we all give up worldly objects, even when we seem most intent on pursuing the one thing needful! and is not here the secret, why there is so much striving, without at last entering in? How easily do we make some earthly pursuit so blend with that of things heavenly, that we weave each his "tangled web," where it is almost impossible to unravel, and decide, what we have really been seeking and toiling after; or how far our conduct will stand the final test!

Now, to illustrate, we are not required to be indifferent to our own interest or reputation. But, if we would not involve the evidences of our spiritual state in inextricable confusion, and miss the consolations of religion, it does become us, honestly to avow to ourselves, what we do for interest's or reputation's sake, and not cloak it under zeal for God.

Suppose now, that we resolve, so far as we increase in riches to be rich towards God—to honor him with our substance, and with the first fruits of all our increase. Now if

we so work ourselves into a notion of the preeminent value of money in the hands of those disposed so to use it, that in our dealings we sometimes bear hard upon others, in a manner, which we could not justify on any other plea, than the purpose to get and use all for the glory of God; it is pretty certain, that this purpose is alloyed with another motive so base, that we must be content with no other reward for our service, than a little addition to our worldly wealth.

Or, if we are forward to contribute to charitable objects, willing to have our names published to the world, as an example and stimulate to others: if we do not act throughout on this motive, with a simplicity, which we are in perilous hazard of loosing; if, while we heartily desire our example to be followed by others, we are well content to receive a small meed of praise for being foremost in a good cause, and sometimes to shape our conduct with particular reference to this end: it is well, if we do not fail of all other reward, than the paltry tribute of human approbation,

Or if we seek spiritual gifts, as means for our own reputation; for even this may be: yes, it is possible to pray for the influences of the divine spirit, hoping thereby to be known for deep and thorough views of religion, superiority to the world, and having the habitual conversation in heaven: if we so pray for spiritual blessings, what wonder, if we ask and receive not? As some asked temporal goods to consume on their lusts, and received not, thus asking amiss; so the same disposition may be but a little more refined, when it asks spiritual gifts, to be consumed on its vain glory.

Something of this must be not so very uncommon. Why else does he, who is more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask, than ye parents are to give good gifts to your children, why else does he so sparingly impart of the divine unction to our supplications? Why, but that we do not seek with that single desire to become holier and to diffuse a better influence to which the promised blessing is attached. Alas! how slowly do we attain to this simplcity of purpose, in seeking conformity to the divine image! and how hardly do we escape the condemnation of the ancient hypocrites, "*All their*

works they do to be seen of men!" Could we see in the broad day-light of heavenly truth all the regard still had to man's opinion, how would it stain the pride of all we do for God and his cause! I know not, who is more free from this hateful quality, to abhor and oppose it as his torment, instead of quietly yielding to be governed by its influence. And, if this be a trait of our infirmity, which the purifying process of returning to earth, and that alone can do away; holy, life-giving spirit, grant us so daily to groan under this burden, and so to aspire for deliverence from this vanity, that we may welcome, in its appropriated time, the event, which shall restore to us our God to be our all in all!

SERMON XV.

BY THE REV. PIERCE CONNELLY, M. A.
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ON DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

MATTHEW VII, 21, 22, 23.

NOT EVERY ONE THAT SAITH UNTO ME LORD, LORD, SHALL ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. MANY WILL, &C.

The *day* spoken of is the dreadful day of judgment. The *kingdom*, is the everlasting paradise, the seat of immortality and blessedness beyond the grave. He who speaks in this authoritative tone is that eternal God, the Son himself, who, we believe, will at that awful season come in glorious majesty with all his holy angels, to determine and pronounce the irrevocable destiny of you and me. The threatened sentence of *depart*, carries with it a doom to woe unutterable and inconceivable, to despair and agony and a horrid necessity of hated life forever. Yet are these words, coming from such a source, bearing such awful import, heard with more listlessness and sooner allowed to perish from the memory than many a light song, or some well-told fiction.

The world, they who make up the world around us, look for a future state of bliss or its reverse, and are conscious, in their secret souls are conscious, that at each moment, the next may fix without recall their portion in the one or in the other; and yet the many in this world around us live on, live on, as if their destiny were terminated at their death, and with the faith of Christains, exhibit in their practice a less than pagan reverance for God, and a less high toned and beautiful morality than was enjoined in the schools and exemplified in the lives of ancient heathens. Possessing reason, they yet act like fools: holding the faith, they yet live like infidels.

By the great bulk of men, the evidences of Revelation are [illegible] unanswerable: the understanding of the most intelligent and the most acute, is unable to resist the testimony of miracles and prophecies, in favor of the gospel; yet far, infinitely far more than half of this great mass, are, as to their hearts, unimpressed by the testimony and practically despise the injunctions and disregard the rules of conduct which that gospel most peremptorily inculcates. They avow, and honestly, their acquiescence in the truth; they rank themselves and sincerely, among the number of Christ's followers, and say with them, Lord, Lord, but they neither seek, nor know, nor do the will of our Father which is in heaven.

I. Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

The words of our Saviour, in the connection in which they are spoken, carry with them a more extensive meaning and far greater force, than, at first sight, one would be likely to imagine. The source and the reason of moral and religious obligation are there disclosed and in an authoritative manner. It is broadly asserted that the will of God is man's duty and as it seems, solely because it is his will; his arbitrary will, if it please you so to call it, for in a certain sense it is true, that the will of a being, whose judgment is as uninfluenced as his authority unlimited, and himself infinite in all his attributes, must be, to mortals, both arbitrary and imperative: but it is also true, that nothing can spring from such a

source, which has not been decreed by the most perfect wisdom and been originated in unbounded goodness, which will not promote the glory of the Almighty himself, and therefore be well suited to the ultimate good of man. For God must be a perfect being; and his creatures happiness must ever be their great Creator's glory.

Since then, the will of God, is thus exclusively, thus peremptorily the source of obligation and the rule of action, since every duty is a duty, only because it is his will, it follows that every precept of revelation, once clearly ascertained, is of equal authority; that no matter how great may be the relative difference of heinousness or of guilt agreeably to human institutions and from peculiar circumstances, and particular consequences, the neglect or disobedience of any external ordinance or positive law, is just as much a sin, and for the very same reason a sin, as is the infraction of any natural duty: or, in other words, that to withhold from the one God, the homage which is his due, to reverence carved or molten images, to take the Almighty's name in vain, to forget the Sabbath's hallowing, to abstain voluntarily from the sacraments or from the assembling of ourselves together for public worship, are, in the sight of God, as positively sins, as to dishonor our earthly parents, to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, to slander, or to covet.

Again, if duties are duties only because they are the will of God, it follows that the same inferences are true in matters of belief, as well as of practice. The mysteriousness of a faith, founded on a revelation, or the necessary arbitrariness of its positive precepts, no more than the severe pureness of its morality, at all lessons the force of the facts upon which rests its divine authority, or, of course, of the obligation of obedience and submission. The mysteries of our holy religion, however much above our reason and the evangelical form of sound doctrine, however contrary to carnal prejudices and carnal pride, are to be received as unhesitatingly, and as implicitly acquiesced in, as its positive ordinances and its pure and rigid rules of moral conduct. The same God who has commanded the one, has prescribed also the other—and if the one half of our

religion be as binding as the other, a sincere performance of all the moral and spiritual duties of christianity (if it were possible) in connection with a total neglect of its sacraments and ordinances and heretical faith, would be just as imperfect a righteousness as that of the scribes and pharisees, which was precisely the reverse; and we know, theirs was only enough to be the argument of an anathema, only enough to purchase for them the curse of exclusion from the number of the blest, and that too, from the lips of the mild and benevolent Jesus himself. It is only the united observance of all his duties, which has ever constituted, which can constitute, man's proper obedience to the will of God.

True, the will of God can only so far be a rule to bind men, as it is plainly discovered to them, and as they are able, honestly able, to comprehend it. And therefore though the will of God is in itself immutable, the standard of duty must be various, for that will is not always revealed to the same extent, or with equal clearness; and moreover, men have different capacities and opportunities of knowledge, and different degrees of grace. What, therefore, would be an acceptable doing of his will, in the sight of God, from the pagan or the savage, would, by no means be so, from one who has a special revelation. Every man, however, must be judged by the laws which have been given him. There is no choosing, whether he will, or whether he will not accept them. There is no resisting their authority, there is no escaping their obligation. The law of nature was the will of God to the Gentiles, the law of Moses to the Jews, and the law of Christ is it to us, and the whole of it is his will. *To offend in one point is to be guilty of all.* On the one hand, "without faith it is impossible to please God," and on the other, "faith, without works, is dead." Profession of belief must be followed by submission and obedience. Confession of sins must be accompanied by amendment of life. He that believeth must be baptized; and he that in regeneration is made partaker of the death of Christ, must continually commemorate the benefits which he receives thereby and devoutly seek, in the sacrament of our redemption, the communication of the body and the blood of that great sacrifice: but at the

same time, he that is adopted to be the child of God, must live as becometh the children of God—and he that drinketh the cup of the Lord and partaketh of the table of the Lord, must not drink the cup of devils, nor partake of the table of devils. Repentance, however bitter, will advantage nothing without fruits meet for repentance; faith, though it could remove mountains, will not profit without charity; devotion, however sincere; a reliance on the merits of Christ, however firm and unreserved, will not save a man without keeping the commandments. No imaginary decree of the Almighty, no personal assurance of his own, will avail a man at the impartial bar of God in the great day of judgment—but to have done the will of our Father which is in heaven.

II. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophecied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.

Extensive as is the number reached by this description, hypocrites, it would seem are not included in it; for there is an air of honesty about the expostulation, made, as it is supposed to be, to Him, whom they who offer it, must then at least recognize as the Searcher of all hearts. The words must then be confined in their application to such as not only make a profession of religion, but are sincere in their faith, and practice their *certain* virtues from principle: who even prophecy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works in the name of Christ, but yet deceive themselves, because they do not in the broad sense, the will of the Father. The class alluded to, then, are those who select for their observation such parts of the will of God, as the disposition of their minds most naturally inclines them to, or the accidental circumstances of their condition most easily permit, or such as most gratify their vanity or best promote their interest, who thus, fondly lull their consciences, and flatter themselves, that, while their affections are at least, equally divided between their duty and their pleasure, between the world and God, they are yet acceptable, because sincere worshippers of Him,

who exacts the whole heart. And strange as it may seem, this is unhappily, most unhappily, the character of many active, zealous, and as they themselves would fain believe, consistent Christians. But it is one thing to be zealously and quite another thing to be consistently a Christian. Many a one is there sound in the faith, submissive in obedience to the church, exemplary in the observance of religious ordinances and private devotion, who yet fulfils not his relative duties. In every public, in every private act of religion, these men are unimpeachable, but they are destitute of charity; they want the practical benevolence, the kindness and humbleness of mind, the meekness, the forbearance, which ought equally to characterize the Christian: their judgment of others is uncandid and severe, their tongues too are unbridled; or they are impatient of dissent, disregardful, haughty, unforgiving, or inhospitable, ungenerous, avaricious; they possess and allow in themselves some few or some one of the infinite number of sins, of vices, of the uncorrected feelings, unhallowed passions, unsanctified affections, which spring up and flourish only in a heart, not, as it ought to be, renewed by the Holy Ghost, and governed by its influences. They seem to be religious, they honestly believe themselves to be so, like the sentenced in the text, they would expostulate with God himself; but they deceive their own hearts,—their religion is vain, their faith is right, but it is not a lively, vigorous, heart-controlling principle; their devotions are regular, but they are acts of cold obedience, not of spontaneous duty, of ardent, grateful love, or firm, confiding trust. *They are not doing*, in heart and in deed, *the will of our Father which is in heaven.*

Is this a harsh commentary, a too melancholy explication of the text? Judge then for yourselves my brethren; imagine yourselves at the grated window of some monastic prison; look into the cell of that mild, self-denying Romanist, or into the closet of that stern Reformer: both are alone, both are on their knees, each in his own way pouring out his soul to God, where no eye but His own is thought to witness, in calm and fervent and sincere devotion. The one, is celebrating mass before ordering the sentence of the Inquisition to be executed

on a young mother and her unborn babe;—the other is imploring a blessing on the intended murder of his friend. And these are the disciples of the mild Redeemer! Blessed Jesus! followers of thee, and in thy name working their iniquities!

The mischiefs may be different, opposite, but their inconsistency is the same, be it ever so variously manifested. There are many others, who are models of holy zeal and fervor, of love and kindness, of meekness and purity, in their general deportment; a beautiful outside of humility; while within, they are the prey of spiritual corruption, of pride and vanity. Their godliness is mixed up with a presumptuous contempt of rites which God himself has instituted, of customs and ceremonies which ancient usage has rendered venerable: "despising dominion," "speaking evil of dignities," "in doctrine shewing corruptness," "wresting the word of God," giving "private interpretations" of scripture, making use of apparent self-abasement and strictness and sanctity, not to establish peace and unity, religion and piety around them to the glory of God; but to promote heresy and schism, to create sects and strengthen parties, to the advancement of their own fame and influence and the gratification of their own vanity.

But enough: each moral virtue, each Christian grace would furnish us examples numberless. It is a sad thought for poor human nature to reflect how many, many, there are who deceive themselves, and a still more sad one, how many at the great reckoning, will expostulate with such ill founded hopes, such unavailing honesty, only to receive the answer of, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity."

True holiness is like the fair tint of the lily or the snow; it is only the proper combination of all the bright colors of the rainbow which produces that pure whiteness; and there must exist and harmonize an assemblage of graces and virtues and external duties, to form the other. Godliness does not excuse from rites and ordinances and all the outward reverence of devotion; nor does the most laborious observance of religious duties, dispense with the strictest purity of heart and innocence of life. The severest exactions of constancy and

self-denial, from these frail mortal bodies, do not compensate, for the want of meekness and kindness and humbleness of mind; but yet is not the most fervent charity, with every earthly virtue, any acceptable compromise for a true and lively faith in Him whom God hath sent, our most blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

By a bold figure, the apostle calls Christians temples of God, and the works of that wise master-builder teach us that repentance, faith, and that good tone of feeling, which in Scripture phrase is love or charity, must form the unseen foundation on which to rear the beautiful superstructure of visible religion, tangible benevolence.

Would to God! Would to God! this lovely moral symmetry were more highly valued—were oftener exemplified; that a larger proportion of the many who say "Lord, Lord," exhibited in their lives and conversation, an obedience to the commandments and a submission to "the will of our Father which is in heaven."

My brethren, it becomes us as rational men to apprehend the importance of this subject, to bring it home to ourselves, individually. It becomes us carefully to examine, and strive thoroughly to understand, what is the will of our Father in heaven, and humbly and fervently imploring the assistance of the blessed Comforter, endeavor to follow it *in all things*. Remembering always the day of judgment and remembering the sad prophecy of our Saviour, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity."

May the merciful God indeed enable us rightly to understand his blessed and most holy will, and also give us grace so to practice it during our probation here, that, when we shall be summoned forth to hear our doom, and you and I be ranged together before the judgment bar, we may escape the dreadful sentence of "depart," and live forever to ascribe glory and honour and praise and power to God our Redeemer, our Justifier, and our everlasting Saviour.

SERMON XVI.

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THE FORM AND POWER OF GODLINESS.

2 TIMOTHY, III, 5.

HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS, BUT DENYING THE POWER THEREOF.

The religion of the Gospel commends itself to the belief and observance of mankind, by the excellence of its doctrines and precepts. It is worthy of its divine author, and nicely adapted to the condition and wants of his intelligent creatures. Its external form of godliness is beautiful and attractive; and it possesses the power, through the spirit of God, to transform and sanctify human nature; and to prepare it for its future glorious destination. It is not necessary, that I should now prove to you the imperfection and corruption of mankind. They who know themselves are conscious, that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* This imperfection and corruption is the cause of that tendency in human nature, over which, in reading the pages of ecclesiastical history, we have so often occasion to sigh—the tendency

to blend the purity and excellence of Christianity with conceptions of doctrine and practice. I shall not attempt to trace the operations of this cause, and the endless evils which, from age to age, it has brought into the world. The Saviour foresaw their introduction, and in different parts of the New Testament, his disciples are cautioned against them. They were predicted in this chapter, and the terms which the apostle uses in his description of them, are very striking. He speaks of a time when the beauty and excellence of Christianity would be greatly obscured, and its professors would act in a manner incompatible with its spirit and precepts. He mentions their inordinate selfishness, their covetousness, their boasting that they had peculiar intercourse, and were high in favor with God, their blasphemy in their representations of his will and character, and their unkindness, ingratitude, and unholy dispositions. The persons whom he describes, were destitute of natural affections; regardless of the most solemn covenants; slanderers of those who held to the truth; furious against all who opposed their corruptions; obstinate in the maintenance of error; actuated by a spirit of pride and censoriousness; and loving pleasure more than God. Notwithstanding all this, they made great pretensions to sanctity—in outward profession they were religious, but virtually denied the power of religion. They *had a form of godliness, but denied its power.*

By the possession of a form of godliness with the denial of its power, the apostle means an empty profession of religion, the profession of the outward form, without the substance—the outward appearance, without the influence of religion, either upon the heart or life.

The essential form of religion, is perfectly drawn in the scriptures. And it is obvious, that those forms which materially differ from the one, which they have delineated, cannot be that form, which, as the followers of Jesus Christ, we ought to adopt. The form of religion has been often changed by the introduction of human inventions. These changes have given use to new organizations; and religion is presented in a

variety of differing systems; between which, men, in general, direct their choice rather by caprice, fancy, or interest, than by a regard to divine truth, and to the conclusions of reason. There is only one true form of religion given us in the word of God. It may be a part of our trial as rational and accountable creatures, to discover, and adopt that form in its original simplicity and beauty. It is a necessary part of religion: and without it, the profession of religion is certainly defective. But to constitute true religion, the form and the power must be united. The profession of the form only, like a picture drawn upon paper, is to have a mere representation of the reality. It is the representation, but not the thing itself. Without the internal and spiritual effects of its power, it has no real value—if its emptiness be discovered, it becomes disgusting to men, it is odious in the sight of God.

The design and end of religion, is virtue and godliness in this life, and beyond this scene of trial, happiness and glory forever. That profession of religion which does not tend to the accomplishment of this design and end, terminates in the outward appearance. It is the mere outward form—the external representation—not the substance—not the reality of religion. In this kind of profession, men draw near to God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, while their hearts are unaffected, and far from him. The proper object of religious profession is spiritual renovation; but in this case, this, if considered at all, is regarded as of secondary importance; and the real object desired and sought for is the notice of men, and the temporary and worldly influence of which it may be an instrument.

The observance of the external forms of religion should be an indication of inward piety and holiness, and of the renewing and sanctifying power of divine grace exerted upon the soul; and all observance which is not of this character, not being made in spirit and in truth, degenerates either into hypocrisy or superstition. Some persons seem to rest their hopes of salvation upon the purity of the faith which they profess; but the faith which is not sustained by works is dead. There can

be no justifying faith which does not, in its influence, reach the heart and life. St. Paul says, *though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* Men may profess the theory of religion —they may have the form of godliness, while in truth they practically deny its power. There have been examples of this in every age. They may perhaps have come within our own observation. It is even possible, that we ourselves, may, on examination, be found to rest in outward forms—having imperceptibly lost the influence of the power on which their efficacy depends. It is a proper subject for caution. It is indeed a subject which should excite our constant and deep solicitude, that in our religion the form and the substance be blended in one faith and practice.

There may be enthusiasm, without what the apostle means by the power of godliness, and there is no form in which men rest, more illusive and dangerous than this.

Some persons rest in sorrow for sin, without aiming at the change of dispositions of their hearts, and the reformation of their lives. They delude themselves with the hope that their practical repentance will be accepted. Repentance however, to be effectual, must include something more than sorrow—it must be complete. It is radically defective, if it does not reach to every known sin. No repentance is genuine which has not for its object the freeing of the soul from all pollution, and implanting virtuous principles and affections; and that repentance which stops short of this is essentially defective.

The worship of religious assemblies, the sacramental institutions of the Gospel, and all those rites which pertain to religious services, help to make up the outward form of godliness. They may be outwardly observed with strictness, and apparent solemnity, and yet their power—the inward and spiritual grace, may not be felt. All of religion, that we really possess, may terminate in the outward observance. If the heart be not engaged in the observance, the use of the form produces no spiritual good—it wants the quality which is neces-

sary to give it efficacy—the quality, without which, it is an empty service—destitute of claim to the acceptance of our heavenly Father.

All forms of religion receive their value from the power of godliness. We may not be able perhaps, exactly to define the power of godliness, or to acquaint you with its nature and operation. To understand it perfectly, we must consider both the cause, and the effect.

As a cause, it is the force of divine truth—it is an inward and spiritual grace—the efficacious working of the divine spirit on the heart and mind.

As an effect, it is the change wrought in the natural man, a faith which embraces religion as a reality—a spirit of piety pervading the soul—a love of holiness inseparable from its practice, a sincere devotion, a cheerful submission to the will of God—affections set on spiritual and divine things—that transformation by which we are crucified unto the world, and the world unto us; by which we have our conversation in heaven, and walking in the spirit are enabled to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. He who, in his religious practice, combines the form with the power of godliness, will be strong in faith, will be actuated by the fear and love of God, will be resigned and submissive to his will, and will pursue the paths of piety and virtue. In the use of forms, Christians should feel the vital energy of their power. It is the life and spirit which they outwardly express, that give them an inward efficacy, and in our observance of them, procure our acceptance. To all spiritual purposes, without the life, and spirit, and the fruits of righteousness, they are an unavailing service.

I would not be thought to undervalue the external forms of religion. They are designed, as means of grace, to promote our advancement in the Christian course. But no exercises of devotion, no use of the means of grace, no constancy in the performance of external rites, can bring to the soul true peace and comfort, if they have no effect in forming the heart anew to piety and holiness. The influence of religion must reach both to the dispositions of the soul, and to the ac-

tions of the life—and that influence must not be inconstant and wavering—on the contrary, it must be firm and lasting, resulting in self-mortification, in victory over the world, and in the fruits of righteousness.

Where this influence is not felt, the form is without the power; and there is a virtual denial of it, which no doubt must be an aggravation of guilt.

Having the form of godliness, it should be our earnest endeavour to manifest its power, in raising us from the death unto sin, to a new and holy life; and in bringing us from darkness into light, and in renewing our souls to the love and practice of holiness. This is indeed the blessed design of the Gospel, and we should never be satisfied with ourselves, until we have the fullest evidence that it has been accomplished in us. Let me now ask you, Brethren, has this gracious design been accomplished in you? In your practice of religion has the form and power of godliness been blended? In your use of the means of grace have you known and felt their spiritual energy? Has the power of godliness softened, changed, and formed anew your spiritual character?

Brethren, the subject of our text is one of great importance. We are all interested in it. You, and I. We are all bound to possess the form of godliness, to have our hearts warmed, and renewed by its power, and to display its influence over our natural passions and desires, and the actions of our life. We do possess, in the constitution of our Church, in her articles of faith, and in her system of worship—scripture, primitive, and evangelical, a form of godliness of surpassing excellence. Our privileges—our advantages in these respects are undoubted. But are we in zeal, in holiness, in christian exertion, what they ought to be, who possess a form so spiritual and perfect? We entertain no doubt of its value, of its unrivalled beauty and excellence, and of its claims to universal acceptance; but are we practically acquainted with its spirit, and willing subjects of its power? Have our hearts been warmed, and quickened, and sanctified in its use? Practically, we deny its power, if in one case, this have not been its effect.

Let the question then be put directly, have we, in its use, been spiritually benefitted? Has it helped to sustain us in our outward course towards the kingdom of heaven? Have we no reason to fear, that in the use of our form of godliness, we are justly chargeable with lukewarmness and formality? What is our sense of responsibility, when we join in our solemn religious services? Are we actuated by an ardent desire to blend the outward emblems with the spirit which they denote? My dear Brethren, what is the answer, which we, individually, and collectively, are able to give to these questions? Alas! how far are we from that love of God; that fervour of religious feeling; that devotion to the service of God; and that spirituality of mind, which ought to pervade the souls and to be manifested in the lives of those who are blessed with the spiritual privileges, which we as Churchmen possess. Present the subject to yourselves in its different relations, contrast your form—your privileges, with your feelings—your spirituality—your practice. Examine your claim to the acceptance of God—your title to receive his spiritual mercies. Have you any reasonable ground to hope for present, and future justification? Oh, deceive not yourselves. Trust not, I beseech you, my beloved Brethren, in the mere outward acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as your Saviour—rest not in the mere use of your primitive, and evangelical forms of religion. Oh, do not practically deny their power—hold not, I entreat you, the form without the substance. Be spiritually minded, and remain not satisfied with yourselves for one hour, if in our public devotions, and religious solemnities, your hearts are not kindled into fervour; and you do not enjoy the hope, and peace, and consolation which the Gospel promises to spiritual worshippers. But are your hearts thus kindled, and are you truly partakers of this peace, hope, and consolation? If you are not, where does the fault lie? Can there be a doubt that it is not in the form, but in the practical denial of the power of godliness. And they who are not blessed with peace, hope, and consolation, must charge the fault upon themselves. The truth is, if we are faulted of our spiritual mercies, it is owing

to our formality, or lukewarmness, or unbelief. And if, with all our means of grace, and opportunities of salvation, we be thus faulted, how great will be our guilt—how aggravated our condemnation!

Religion is presented in a great variety of forms. We have already remarked that the inventions of men have often changed the system of Christian faith, and the worship and organization of the Christian Church. In the nature of things, there can be but one which we are bound to adopt—for the very obvious reason, that the scriptures contain the delineation of only one. But even in this age, they are constantly multiplying, and now are so extravagant, or absurd, as not to gain adherents. They are, however, for the most part, the offspring of religious excitement, and men decide to embrace them on the ground of feeling. The heart, so desperately wicked and deceitful, furnishes their only logic.

The Church of which we are members, more than any other, possesses the character of permanence and stability. Her form is not calculated to produce, nor does she desire periodical, mechanical, and tumultuous excitement. But her services are calculated to warm, and animate the devotional affections; and to cherish a spirit of uniform, rational and sublime piety. Their pure, spiritual and evangelical nature are equally removed from the heresy and fanaticism—the rational, and mechanical systems by which men would advance the cause of religion. She claims attachment and communion, on the best of all grounds,—on the ground of principle—not on the ground of uncertain, undefined, and ever varying feeling excited in the heart; but on the ground of divine institution, and divine appointment. On no other ground ought our religious association to be determined, and on no other, can it ever be determined with safety. What is the will of God should be our only enquiry; and that clearly ascertained should be our will, and our choice.

SERMON XVII.

BY THE REV. T. STRONG.
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CHRIST THE RANSOM AND HOPE OF THE SINNER.

MICAH, VI. 6.

WHEREWITH SHALL I COME BEFORE THE LORD AND BOW MYSELF BEFORE THE HIGH GOD.

If the human race had never been placed beneath the power and penalty of sin; if the hearts and affections of the children of men were uniformly fixed upon the things which belong to their everlasting peace, and if their lives were marked by no deviations from the path of virtue and holiness,—still, it could not be an uninteresting consideration with them how they might approach the presence of the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, and in what manner and with what expectations they might hold communion and intercourse with the Being upon whom they were dependent for every temporal enjoyment and for the fulfilment of all the hopes which pointed to immortality. Their relation to the great Supreme, even in a state of innocence and of purity, would render a knowledge of his character most important to their happiness; and from the circumstance that their present condition was in subjection to his providence and government, and that their final destinies were entirely at his disposal, they would find it of the highest concern to obtain correct views of his nature and disposition.

The sincerity and the constancy of their offerings, with the perfection of their confidence, their obedience and their love, would depend upon their assurance of the paternal and protecting care of the Deity whom they worshipped; and that deep sense of personal obligation, derived not merely from the experience of temporal benefits, but, also, from the hope of future glory, which could alone unite them by a sacred bond to the author of their existence, would need, both for its excitement and its perpetuity, the sanctifying influence of those devout contemplations which had for their object the essential attributes of the Creator as involving the dearest interests of his creatures.

And if the necessities of mankind, in a state which had never been debased by the introduction and the ravages of sin, would lead them to seek, and to esteem as most precious, such a knowledge of God as might regulate their services, exalt their affections and confirm their trust, with what increased force are they urged to the inquiry when sinking under the pressure of accumulated transgressions? If indifference to the divine character would not become a righteous person, how strong should be the motive to its examination in those whose hearts and lives have been corrupt and perverse from the beginning? To such, indeed, the question of our text is applicable, and the subject which it presents for consideration is of unspeakable importance to us all. The language of the holy scriptures, in describing the human character, is of the most decided and unequivocal kind. It sets forth, in a clear and comprehensive manner, the cause and the extent of that great moral disorder which has made the world we inhabit the melancholy scene of sorrow and of death. With the deepest solemnity, and in terms which none but the blind and the obstinate can misunderstand, it declares the lamentable fact, that in consequence of the disobedience and the fall of our *first parents*, a righteous sentence of condemnation was passed upon all men; that in *their* forfeiture of the privileges

and expulsion from the delights of the terrestial Eden, the gates of the paradise on high became closed against their descendants; and that the cherubim and the flaming sword which guarded the way of the tree of life from the approach of the apostate pair, was illustrative of that exhibition of divine justice which rendered the grave, in its darkness and its desolation, the boundery of hope to every succeeding generation. It teaches us that in our depraved natures, our evil passions and our confirmed acts of iniquity, we are all guilty before God; that we have provoked his just displeasure and indignation, and that, for our manifold and aggravated offences we are liable to the awful and extreme severity of his punishments. And to the truth of these representations, the general history of mankind and the unbiassed consciences of individuals, in all ages and nations, bear ample corroborative testimony.

From the remotest periods of antiquity, and among those upon whom the light of revelation never dawned, a prevailing sense of sinfulness and exposure to suffering, as its just desert, has been manifested. The most barbarous and ignorant of the heathen have felt, though without any definite or correct idea of the truth, that they were not, naturally, in a state of favor with the powers above them; that, for some inexplicable reason, moral infirmities and imperfections were the appointed portion of humanity, and that the most costly sacrifices were required in order to obtain the benefits which they desired, and to avert the judgments that they feared. And, hence, it has happened, that no country or tribe, of which we have any account, has been altogether without a system of religion that did not provide some method by which it was imagined that sin might be forgiven and the gods propitiated. The impressions and sentiments, moreover, that, in these particulars, have been common to pagan societies, notwithstanding the deplorable superstitions with which they have too often been blended, were far from being slight or accidental.

The belief and the convictions that have been entertained, possessed an influence over every concern and relation of life; and the supposed heinousness of faults committed, and the apprehended extent of evils dreaded, may be learnt from the fact that, to make atonement for the former, or to stay the progress of the latter, the strong sympathies of natural affection have been stifled, and the shoutings of the parent have triumphed over the dying agonies of the immolated child.

It is common for those who have been blessed with the benefits, and who know how to appreciate the excellence of the christian dispensation,to commiserate the darkness and delusion which have shrouded pagan lands. They read with emotions of horror, mingled with the deepest pity and compassion, the sad records which exhibit the operations and effects of a religion that seem founded altogether upon the principle of fear, and which gives its sanction to the direst deeds of cruelty and of blood. Their hearts rise within them as they reflect upon the revolting scenes which every where meet the eye amidst the idolatries of the people that know not God; and, in the view of murdered victims of every age and condition, their prayers and their exertions are united for the introduction of the pure and sanctifying faith of the gospel into those regions of ignorance and wo. But the characters and the conduct, which thus excite our sorrow and our benevolence are, fraught with lessons of instruction that concern our own profession and belief. They add to the proofs of that spiritual alienation from God and holiness, which the scriptures declare to be universal, and they furnish, also, an argument of no little weight in support of the necesity of the sufferings of innocence as an atonement for human guilt. There is no natural connexion, that we can possibly comprehend, between the offering of sacrifices, in itself considered, and the bestowment of the divine mercy and forgiveness. Nor can we conceive, when we look at the practice as it has always prevailed among the heathen, without any

reference to the revelation that God has placed in our hands, what association of ideas, what direction of habit, or what exercise of reason, should ever have led to its adoption. But when we compare their customs with the accounts which the volume of inspiration has given us of transactions, intended, under the immediate appointment of the Most High, for the accomplishment of the same object, and when we perceive that the latter derived their whole value from their allusion to the great event which they were designed to prefigure, the death of Jesus Christ, we have, indeed, something of a guide to the origin of the former, and are, consequently, justified in considering them among the evidences of that fact which forms the subject of the most prominent and the most interesting article of our faith.

The probability is, and it is strengthened by the earliest scripture notices, that, immediately upon the apostacy of our first parents and the promise of a deliverer from the degraded state into which they had fallen, sacrifices were instituted with express reference to the method in which the sins of the world were, in the fullness of time, to be expiated, and that the tradition, in some form, was continued down through every branch of the family of Noah. That the original object and allusion should soon be lost, where there was no written revelation to secure them, cannot be deemed strange when we consider the character of mankind, and the changes which are continually taking place in the world. The thing itself, as a rite essential to religion would, nevertheless, remain ;— and, as soon as this became observed for its own sake, and honored for the imaginary merit which it possessed in itself, nothing could be more natural in the selection of victims for the altar, than to suppose those would be most availing in the sight of God, which were most dear and precious in the estimation of man. Hence, under the powerful excitement of religious enthusiasm, the strongest ties of nature were easily dissolved, and the parent became not only willing, but

eager to purchase the favor of heaven with the blood of a devoted child. And hence, too, is derived all that variety of sacrifice, which, among ignorant and barbarous nations, has been so shocking to the feelings of civilized humanity, and so powerful in its claims upon the active benevolence of all who have inherited the true and holy faith.

Considering, then, the state and character of mankind as sinners, exposed to the wrath of an offended God, to be determined by revelation and confirmed by the history of the world, to which we may also add the dictates of conscience in every individual who has not become hardened by transgression, we are prepared to estimate the importance of the inquiry in the text:—"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" From the connexion of these words, as they appear in the book of the prophet, it is evident that they refer to the way in which we are to approach the presence of our Maker with the hope that he will look graciously upon us, and forgive us our iniquities. It is not, however, to the act of prayer and supplication alone that our thoughts are to be directed by them, but to that general contemplation of the character and perfections of the Supreme being in which our eternal prospects are involved, and to all those feelings which are connected with the grand and interesting subjects of accountability, and immortality. Viewing ourselves as sinners, and liable on account of our offences, to the full weight of the divine displeasure, with what offering or qualification can we come before the God of Heaven, with the assurance that he will receive us into his favor, and make us to participate in the abundance of his mercy and loving-kindness? Although he has declared himself to be angry with the wicked every day; and notwithstanding the dreadful effects of his wrath which have often been experienced in desolating judgments by a guilty world, we have every reason to suppose that he is, in himself, essentially and infinitely good and benevolent; that he wills the happiness and not the misery of his creatures, and that

the punishment which he, at any time, inflicts, is, indeed, as expressed by the sacred writer, "his strange work." But, with our depraved natures and unholy lives, how are we to obtain an interest in his benevolence consistently with the satisfaction that is due to his dishonored government and his violated justice? Sacrifices and burnt-offerings, in their own nature, however numerous or valuable they may be, are of no avail—repentance, though deep and agonizing, cannot, by any virtue it possesses in itself, change the desert of former crimes; and obedience, to give sanction to any claims of approbation and reward, must be distinguished, not only for its sincerity, but, also, for its constancy and its perfection. Where, then, is the hope of the fallen transgressor! Where is that foundation of security upon which he may rest for the salvation of his soul? To what system and to what object can he look for the provision and the ability which may shield him from the penalty and the curse denounced upon every offender, and make easy his entrance into the abodes of life everlasting? "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD!" "*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah—this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with me.*"

Here, then, blessed be God, we are made acquainted with an offering which is sufficient for all our necessities. In the sacrifice that was consummated upon the cross, we may find a remedy for all our spiritual diseases—a sure method of deliverance from every evil to which our wickedness has exposed us. And this, too, we may plead in our behalf when we "come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God," with a complete and unwavering certainty and confidence that it will prevail in procuring the remission of our sins and the inheritance of endless felicity in heaven. A

way is thus provided for the recovery, the safety and the happiness of fallen man, in which justice and mercy, righteousness and truth are wonderfully and gloriously combined, and wherein the wisdom of the exalted majesty of heaven and earth is clearly manifested, and his holiness thoroughly and sublimely vindicated. Here we are led to behold and admire the extent of that love by which the dispensations of Jehovah in regard to our helpless and guilty race, are influenced; while, at the same time, we are supplied with the strongest and purest motives to devote ourselves, unreservedly, with all our faculties of soul and body, to the service of that compassionate Redeemer who has relieved our greatest wants, and ransomed us freely from the destruction to which we are liable.

In the improvement of our subject, let me urge upon you, my brethren, the vast importance of having your principles well established upon this great fundamental of our holy religion, and of cultivating, under the guidance of the blessed spirit, that true and living faith by which the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ are to be apprehended and enjoyed. It cannot be supposed, for a moment, that any one who believes, with sincerity, in the christian system, as a revelation from God to man, is *professedly* daring to rest his hopes of forgiveness and his expectations of heaven upon the merits of any thing which is not derived from this source. No one who pretends to the character and the privileges of a disciple, will be so bold as to declare, in opposition to the whole tenor of the Bible, that he can "come before the Lord, and bow himself before the high God," with a sure confidence and trust, that mercy and peace will be caused to flow to him through some other channel than that which proceeds from the blood of the victim who hung upon the cross of Calvary. But it may be that there is, in practice, an actual dependence, altogether at variance with the faith that has been imbibed and the professions that are made. So

deceitful is the human heart, and so closely interwoven with our natures are the passions of pride and self-love, that we are never free from the danger of estimating what the Gospel will not warrant us as the procuring cause of our salvation. Or, at least, we are prone to divide the merit upon which eternal life is suspended, between the Saviour and our own performances and qualifications, and even to attribute the greater part to the latter. There are many things which are to be considered as excellent and praise-worthy, which are required of us by the precepts of the gospel; which are necessary as evidences and fruits of our faith, and to which even the recompense of reward is promised—but they are not our *Saviour's*, although their absence may prove us unfit for an inheritance with the saints in light. The kind affections and sympathies of the heart, the conscientious performance of those moral duties which are essential to the welfare of communities, families and individuals, and a regular and devout observance of the various ordinances and appointments which are numbered with the means of grace—all these are demanded of us as christians, and, when exhibited in sincerity and consistency, under the exercise of that faith which has the Son of God for its author and its object, are acceptable in the sight of our Maker, and profitable in advancing our progress, and assimilating our tempers to the society of the redeemed in heaven. Still, they claim not the high honor of having broken down the barrier which interposed between the transgressions of the creature, and the mercy of the Creator; they possess not the worthiness that could transform us from aliens and rebels, into children and heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. This belongs wholly, exclusively, to the divine Immanuel; for *there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby they can be saved.*

In every service, therefore, and in every direction of our minds to the things that are unseen and eternal, let us remember and feel that it is only by aid through Christ Jesus, that we can be justified before God; that he alone *is the way, and the truth, and the life*, and that every other foundation of

hope and trust, will be worthless and unavailing. And that our gratitude and our love may, in some measure, correspond with our obligations, and excite us to the zealous and continued practice of piety and holiness, let us accustom ourselves to deep and serious reflections upon that state in which we were placed by reason of sin, and upon the greatness of our deliverance, discovered in those exceeding precious promises which open to our view all the glories of the celestial world in reserve for our enjoyment forever. And thus shall we "come before the Lord, and bow before the high God," with that faith in the offering of Jesus Christ, which will fill us even now with the peace that passeth all understanding, and insure our final justification and acceptance when we stand at the tribunal of our Judge.—Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

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THE PATH OF THE JUST.

PROVERBS IV. 18.

THE PATH OF THE JUST, IS AS THE SHINING LIGHT, WHICH SHINETH MORE AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY.

The Scriptures frequently employ the terms, "light and darkness," to illustrate the varieties in the moral characteristics of men. In the text, connected with its succeeding verse, the wise author of the Book of Proverbs has applied these terms for an accurate delineation of the characters and expectations of two separate classes of men. In an antithesis, not more beautiful than just, he has described the different effects of a religious and unholy life;—the tranquility, pleasure and assurance, which are consequent upon the

one, and the anxiety, sorrow and despair, which are of necessity produced by the other. While the Christian's path, with the pure light of heaven, shines with increasing brilliancy until the measure of its power is lost in a perfect day,—"the way of the wicked is as darkness,—they know not at what they stumble." Their path is filled with snares and dangers,—over which no beam of light can pass,—to warn them of approaching evil. And sadness, and terror, and ruin, settle around all their ways.

Though a progressive character is here assigned only to the path of the just, it is quite evident, that in the moral application of the figure, it belongs with equal truth to the way of the wicked. The reason of this limitation is, that in the language which is here used, the illustration was incapable of being farther extended. If darkness so thick, that all power of discrimination has passed away, and they know not at what they stumble, now marks the way of sinners, no increase of obscurity can be imagined.

But, however bright and overpowering any present light may be, we can easily conceive of a vast increase of its power. It was at noon day, when the natural sun was shining in the fullness of its strength, that Saul of Tarsus beheld a light from heaven, so far exceeding it, that its power was forgotten, and the sun was hidden, not in darkness, but in the greater display of the boundless glory of God.

Not more truly in fact, does increasing vigilance purify and extend the holiness of the child of God, than do multiplying transgressions render more aggravated, and impenetrable, the guilt and hardness of the unconverted heart. And just as surely as the more abundant recompense of glory will be provided for the man who for many years has ceased not to grow in conformity to the image of the Son of God, will the aged transgressor, the man who from youth, to grey hairs, has continued to go astray, meet with a retribution, some in proportion to the duration of his guilt.

A stationary character, among the moral and accountable creatures of Jehovah, is a matter of impossibility. He who

is not daily approximating to the light of life, is sinking with increasing certainty, into that blackness of darkness, of which the scaling and most terrifying distinction is, that it is forever. We are only deceiving ourselves, if we suppose not, that while careless and unreconciled to God, the sins of tomorrow shall be as this day, only more abundant; or if we look for any other result of transgression, than that the load will hourly accumulate, which is now sufficient to sink us into unutterable perdition. A reflection so solemn, upon the unavoidable tendency of a life, uncontrolled by the spirit, the motives, or the hopes of the Gospel, should lead reasonable men to desire those paths which multitudes of far higher intelligence have found to be alone productive of life and peace. "Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun,"—but far more blessed is his condition, whose heart, the dayspring from on high, hath visited, delivering him from darkness and the shadow of death, and guiding his feet into the way of peace.

It is this condition of the enlightened and justified man which is so beautifully described in our text, and which offers us for the present occasion, an instructive and delightful subject of remark:—

I. The persons, of whom the assertion of our text is made, will present our first subject of remark.—

The term *just*, we frequently meet in the sacred scriptures with an application, like that of our text, and yet, the allowance that any man were just in the sight of God, would seem to be inconsistent with the broad and unlimited statements which the scriptures contain of man's deep and inherent depravity, and alienation from God. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and the imaginations of the thoughts of their heart are only evil continually." "There is not a just man on earth, that liveth and sinneth not." This being the universal description of a fallen race of beings, it will follow as a consequence too apparent, to be susceptible of proof, that in his natural character, or by his own strength, no man can be counted just or righteous before God.

But in the scriptural use of the term of our text, it will be found to have two applications, either of which will answer our present purpose; for indeed, they are of necessity, always found united, in the same individual. Man may be called *just*, because the prevailing habit of his life, is a practical obedience of the divine commands, though by no means delivered, from every stain of sin, and his constraining purpose of action, is an earnest desire, to become daily more conformed to the holy image and will of God. It is under this sin that Noah was said to be a "just man," and "perfect in his generations," and one who "walked with God," and Cornelius, a just man, and one who feared God.

Or man may be said to be just, because he is found in Jesus Christ, clothed with his righteousness, confiding in his obedience unto death, and freely justified, or made just, through the redemption, that there is in him. Under this view, it is said "the just by faith, shall live," and "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." If we consider the term of our text as being before us, the character of man, under either of these aspects, as habitually, by divine grace, practically righteous in his conduct, or as perfectly justified and accepted, through the righteousness of another, we shall find it perfectly consistent, with the broadest exhibitions of man's natural depravity, and truly a subject, for the assertion which the text contains.

Then only is man, either generally holy in his character, or accounted just before God, when by the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, he has been converted from a natural state of guilt, and transformed into the image of God's dear Son. In the unregenerate heart, there is no good thing, no principle of holiness, no tendency to God, no trace of similitude to him. These principles from their very germ are all plants of a foreign and heavenly growth. The Holy Spirit, who is the great keeper of the vineyard of the Lord, implants them in the ground, which his own cultivation has prepared for their reception, and under his care and nurture, they flourish and bring forth fruit, unto life eternal. It is this spiritual conver-

sion to God, which manifests its progress, from infancy to strength, in the germination and growth, of every holy and heavenly principle, which flows from the unassisted power of God as its origin, and produces the mind, which was in Christ, as its result, which forms the only ground, upon which man, can be denominated just. The man who has experienced it, is a child of God, and of grace. He is just with God, because he has found acceptance in his beloved Son, and he is just with men, because the whole character of his life, is marked by overruling and increasing holiness. Of such an one, it may be said with truth, that his path, is as the shining light. He is a christian, a believer, a converted man, a child of God. He has been made so, by a new birth unto righteousness. He has just begun to live, for the great purpose, for which he was made, and has entered upon a path of increasing conformity to God, in which he shall walk forever.

II. This path, our text declares to be "as the shining light." The natural state of man, is a state of darkness: and the wicked or unconverted portion of men, are truly said, to "walk in darkness." Their minds are blinded through the ignorance that is in them. An impenetrable obscurity covers every object, with which it is important for them, to become acquainted. They are ignorant of their own characters and deserts. They are ignorant of the character and dealings of the God whom they are required and are bound to serve. They are blind to the fearful prospect of recompense which eternity spreads before them. They are ignorant of any means by which they may escape the awful condemnation of sin. And for all the purposes for which light has come into the world, they are in Egyptian darkness. They are pursuing their heedless course of life, catching eagerly at the phantoms, which are seen to cross their path, unconcerned for the dangers which surround their steps, and careless for all the evils, which the journey of another hour may reveal. Mark the infatuation, with which a sinner pursues, what he considers interest, or profit, or pleasure; utterly void of reflection upon any painful consequences, which he may be required to endure. Observe the pertinacity with which, upon the

very brink of interminable woe, he will plan his worldly enjoyments, for years to come, and follow the wanderings of the delusive light of sin, "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not, that it is for her life." Behold him trifling and vain, when the vengeance of eternal fire, is brusting up before him, and then tell me what more evidence you ask of the blindness of an unconverted man?—or of the darkness, in which he walks?

While this is the natural state of man, when the "grace of God which bringeth salvation," is received into his heart, it comes to him, as a light from heaven, shining in a dark place. It illuminates that valley of the shadow of death, in which he has been lying down with so much contentment reveals to him, a thousand dangers, which he never saw before, and kindles amazement in his heart, at the grace, which would pluck him, from such degradation and ruin. It shines upon his own character and life, and displays to him, the repulsive deformity, the deep pollution, the entire alienation, from the life and image of God, which has, from the beginning, marked his soul, in the sight of his heart-searching judge. It shines back upon all the ways and attributes of the king of heaven, reveals him, as a Being, of unspotted holiness, and inflexibly just, and impresses upon the sinner's heart, the indelible conviction, that he has no hope for mercy on his own account; that if God should enter into judgment with him, he could not be justified. It shines with appalling brightness upon that lake, which burneth forever and ever, as the recompense of sin, and revealing thus the imminent necessity for immediate escape, it awakens an unconquerable desire, to be brought from darkness, so apparent and so fearful, to the marvellous light of a great salvation.

This desire, it gratifies abundantly. This illuminating grace, is not like the lightning, which casts a momentary glare, across the path of a midnight traveller, revealing for an instant, the brow of a precipice before him, merely to render the more terrific, the darkness, in which it leaves him. But, like the increasing power of the morning sun, it leads

him with thankfulness and confidence, to a day of peace. Again it shines, upon the blood stained cross of Jesus, and shews that, by an inestimable sacrifice, the ransom has been paid; upon the great mediator, standing before the throne of God, and convinces that there is one, able to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto him; upon a heavenly crown, brilliant with gems of eternal righteousness and peace, and fills the new born soul, with a longing wish, that he had the wings of a dove, that he might flee away, and be at rest. It shines upon the face of Jesus Christ, and as from an unerring mirror, its reflections upon the heart of the penitent sinner, are mercy and peace, and hope, and assurance forever. Thus for his own comfort and security, does the grace of God, come upon the sinner's soul, like a shining light.

But it shines, not for himself alone. By giving to his character, a heavenly illumination, as an example of every virtue, and every praise, it shines abroad a blessing invaluable to all. The path of the just, or the converted man, commences with this light from above, which in its first bestowal, it is true, shines only for himself, but which in its succeeding progress, manifests its presence and power to the world, by the holy effect which it produces, in his whole intercourse with men, and brings abundant glory to the name of God, by the conformity, to his image, which it displays. Like a city set upon a hill, the converted man cannot be concealed. He becomes to all, an object of remark; he is known and read of all men, and he testifies by the unvarying conduct of his life, that the renewing power which dwells and operates within him, is from no earthly origin, but cometh down from the great Father of lights, of whose immeasurable goodness, it is the evidence and result. This is the brightness which is shed upon the path of the just, which warms while it illuminates, and purifies, while it enlivens, and both in his own soul, and abroad to the world, shineth more and more, unto a perfect day.

III. The progressive character of the christian's path, is the third point set before us in our text. As originally he was in

darkness, and by the light of life, this darkness has been removed, so in his still succeeding steps, his illumination is gradual and increasing. When the light of the natural day first breaks upon our eyes, we behold it in the fairest streaks of purple, which shooting upwards from the horizon, strive in vain to reach the zenith; while we gaze upon its beauty, it rapidly increases upon our view. Its purple tints are lost in the splendour of its progress, and the whole hemisphere is filled with the glories of its illumination. So is it, when the day-spring from on high visits the benighted soul. In its first dawn, its apparent power is entirely imperfect. It reveals the objects of spiritual vision, truly indeed, as regards their reality, but altogether indistinct, in their colouring and dimensions. The sinner when first awakened, has but faint and unsatisfactory conceptions of the objects by which his attention is to be attracted. He sees men almost as trees walking. He but partially apprehends the extent of his own corruption and danger, and though he is truly aroused from his slumbers, by the grace of God, he can only generally ask, from an alarming consciousness of some great deficiency, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This early dawning of conviction, sufficiently assures him of his necessity, though it does not manifest its full extent, and leads him earnestly to desire the arising upon his soul of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings, that his full conversion may be accomplished, and his prospect of deliverance be rendered sure and distinct.

When he has experienced that renewing grace, which transforms the child of wrath into the child of God, his light will shine more and more. He will go on from strength to strength, in the knowledge and love of God, till he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus. And whether we consider this indwelling light of grace, as shining for his own comfort and peace, or as exhibiting in his conduct, to the view of others, as in a transparent painting, the lovely and attractive features of the Son of God, it will be found, constantly to increase in its power and its effects, till it attains the point, which our text assigns as its conclusion, "a perfect day." The light which

shines from the example and character of a real child of God, extends its mild and lovely influence, even to the scenes and the inhabitants, of a world which lieth in wickedness; and universal kindness, and universal love, distinguishing the mind which was in Christ, mark the benign and holy dispositions, which he has implanted in every converted heart. This light is from a perfect source, and tends to perfection as its result. It came from God to man, and preparing man for the change, it carries him back, with itself to the God in whom it had its origin. Like the natural sun, in his morning's progress to a perfect aspect and influence, unlike him only in this, that the moment of perfection, is not the commencement of decline. The light of grace knows no exposure to decrease. To its whole period of existence, this life is but the morning's dawn. Through the succeeding ages of eternity, it becomes more and more perfect in perfection, and unceasingly approximating to the great source of light and life, it shines forever in the glories of his existence.

IV. This is the perfect day, to which our text has led us. This is the desirable result, when every thing mortal and infirm is swallowed up, in the immortal bliss of heaven. The Christian's perfect day, is never attained within the limits, of this fallen and distracted world. Here, sin has deformed every moral prospect, and tainted every lingering trait of moral purity, and we shall in vain hope to escape entirely, from its contaminating influence. Whatever be the extent of our progress in a spiritual life, we shall feel constrained, to the last expiration of mortal existence, to adopt the self-abasing conclusion of the apostle, "not as though I had already attained, either were already made perfect, but this one thing still I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus." Even, when to the observation of others, the Christian's path seems almost to have attained its perfect point, his own heart will shew him, some dark corners, where the renovating light has not yet shone in the fulness of its power.

But go with him one litte step, while he crosses the narrow limit, which separates earth from heaven, and you find the perfection of his character, no longer the mere subject for hope. All his infirmities and corruptions, are deposited forever in the grave, and his triumphant spirit, emancipated from her bonds and burdened with no retarding weight, ascends with unmingled joy, to the mansions, which her Redeemer hath prepared. There the Christian is perfect, and at home forever. He is received as a welcome child, by God the Father of all, by Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, by the eternal spirit of sanctifying grace. While every holy inhabitant of heaven rejoices, that another voice, is to sing the praise of Jesus, and another harp to swell the triumphs of his love. There where sin is not permitted to intrude its hateful form, where every aspect of rebellion is unknown, where sorrow and sighing are utter strangers, where every thing that can enhance the happiness, or extend the glory of the child of God, is unalterably secured to his possession, we may behold "the perfect day." Purified from all sin, the spirit of the just man, is made perfect in holiness. Delivered from all suffering, he is made perfect in bliss. United forever to the God, whom he has loved, whatever happiness, the power of God, is competent to bestow, is assured to him. And through the succeeding ages of an eternal state, he finds God is continually adding to his recompense such enjoyments, as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

This "perfect day," is the sure result of the path of the just or converted man, whose progress from the bondage of natural guilt, to the glorious kingdom of the living God, we have now traced. He was found, lost in the darkness and shadow of death; God looked upon him in this wretched condition, with the tenderest compassion, loved him, when he knew nothing and cared nothing for him, and by the power of his spirit, awakened him, converted him, and purified him for his presence in glory. The divine grace of Jesus has enlightened his darkness, leads him on, in paths of holines and peace,

enables him to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, in all things, and stablishing, strengthening, and settling him, renders him meet to become a partaker of the inheritance, of the saints in light. Unlimited and sovereign grace, rescued him from his death in trespasses and sins. Unlimited and sovereign grace, brings him at last in triumph, freely justified and fully sanctified, there to rest forever, where is the fulness of joy, and where are pleasures forevermore.

V. In concluding this subject with a solemn personal application, let me honestly ask every hearer, have you ever received this new creating light of grace? Have you ever been brought from the guilt and ruin of an unregenerated state, to the knowledge and love of the Gospel? In looking back upon the transgressions and ignorance of former periods of your life, and beholding with thankfulness, a radical and entire change in your affections and your conduct, can you say, "whereas I was blind, now I see?" Do the effects and the power of religion, as found in your conduct and experiences, convince you, that the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth? Unless God hath shined in your hearts, to give you a knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, you are in darkness, until now. Look at the prevailing affections of your hearts, and see whether you are the child, or the enemy of God; are they spiritual and heavenly? or are they bound beyond the power of momentary liberation, to the things of time and sense! Have you any experience of the love of God, shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost. Look at the habitual character of your external conduct, and do you manifest the mind, which was in Christ? Not conformed to this world, but transformed in the renewing of your mind, is your conduct an illustration of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God? Or are you worldly, sensual and unrestrained, in the example, which you habitually manifest before men? About such evidences as these, there can be no mistake, and if light and darkness do fairly characterize the eternally diverging paths of the righteous and the

wicked, as well might light and darkness be confounded, as these paths exhibit to you, the same appearances.

But while there are some of you, whose hearts, the Lord has visited in mercy, see that your light shine more and more. As months and years pass away, see that there is a holy and honourable improvement in your character and life. Your growth may not be rapid, though it be sure. The tree, whose increasing measure, you cannot daily determine, the lapse of a year will shew you, to have been constantly and much enlarging itself. Be not discouraged, though your progress appear slow; wait upon the Lord, and he shall renew your strength. Maintain a habit of sincere communion with him, and he will never say to you, seek ye my face in vain. Keep your heart steadfastly fixed upon the end of your vocation, look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. Draw daily from his living fountain, and however slow and feeble may at times, appear its influx upon your soul, it shall be a well of water within you, springing up unto everlasting life. By fervent prayer, by unremitting watchfulness, and by a decided determination to avoid all known transgression; by a simple dependance upon the strength of God and the renewing grace of his Spirit, you will go on, conquering and to conquer, and will daily find, your most formidable enemies, put in subjection under your feet; and though your light shine but dimly now, the fact that it shines at all, is abundant ground for encouragement, that it shall be made to shine more and more, unto the perfect day. Go on then, with persevering diligence. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that endureth to the end, shall be saved." And when the terrible light of a final and resistless conviction shall in the great and awful day break upon those who now reject the light of the Gospel grace, and the remembrance of accumulated ingratitude and transgression, of grace rejected and love despised, shall burst like a flood upon the souls of the guilty, and sweep away their feigned excuses, their paltry

pleas for sin, and no longer able to be blind, they will and must see, the ruin which they have brought upon themselves, you shall lift up your heads with joy, for your redemption will have come, and the morning of a perfect day will bring unutterable rejoicing to your souls. May the Angel of the covenant keep you all your lives long, and bring you in triumph and peace, to an eternal dwelling in your Father's house.

The Publisher of the American Episcopal Pulpit, cannot refrain from expressing his unfeigned gratitude to those friends who have kindly smiled on his humble efforts to promote the cause of Christ and the Church by "rendering the labours of our Clergy more extensively useful"---to the Rev. Gentlemen who have contributed to the value and interest of its pages---to the Editors of periodical publications who have favourably marked its progress, and to a numerous list of patrons who have punctually complied with the terms of subscription, and as he trusts, given permanency to the work. The volume for 1832, will be printed on better paper and improved in the typographical execution. It will be continued to the subscribers of the first volume, and should any wish to discontinue the same, they are requested to drop a line to the Publisher or any of his agents, to that effect, before the first of January 1832.

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1 John i. 8, 9. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. - 83

SERMON IX.

THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

Mark xvi. 15. And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. - - - - 95

SERMON X.

THE REIGN OF HEAVEN.

Matthew vi. 10. Thy kingdom come. - - - 111

SERMON XI.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

Romans i. 16. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. - - - - - 121

SERMON XII.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

Revelations xxi. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things. 129

SERMON XIII.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE GOSPEL.

1 Corinthians ii. 1, 2. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. - - - 147

SERMON XIV.

THE REWARD SOUGHT, OBTAINED.

Matthew vi. 16. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 159

SERMON XV.

ON DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

Matthew vii. 21, 22, 23. Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will, &c. - - - - 169

SERMON XVI.

THE FORM AND POWER OF GODLINESS.

2 Timothy iii. 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. - - - - - - - - 177

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST THE RANSOM AND HOPE OF THE SINNER.

Micah vi. 6. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God. - - - - - 185

SERMON XVIII.

THE PATH OF THE JUST.

Proverbs iv. 18. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. - - - 194